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v.181, no.12

THE NEW REPUBLIC

September 22, 1979 Price One Dollar

Castro and Carter—*Tad Szulc* • **Does America Matter?**—*Henry Fairlie*

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TRB

from Washington
September 22, 1979

Europe on SALT

Where's the excitement, where's the crowd? I go up the great circular marble stairway to the Senate hearing room on SALT—the queues were half a block long last spring. The police still have a full security check, but nobody's here. I go through the electronic frame, a doorway to nowhere. It says I'm not armed. Only two cops ask if I'm "Press"; I don't have to show a card. The chamber with 50-foot ceilings is half full. There's only one other reporter at my table. The excitement is elsewhere: it's the storm over Cuba; the latest tropical hurricane named Frank (for Church)—hear it roar! SALT bends and threshes.

The irony is that they've picked this day to hear Europeans on SALT. Ostensibly all our allies want SALT. There was the joint press conference of German chancellor Schmidt and British prime minister Margaret Thatcher in London on May 11; they advocated "quick, swift ratification." Then Schmidt said in his Harvard commencement speech, June 7, "This treaty is a piece of world history. It is also a piece of world security and a piece of my own country's security."

But SALT opponents whispered that this was just a bluff; Europeans really feared the treaty but were pressured by Carter into support. Seanate debate comes at a critical time; it is a test of whether America has the leadership qualities necessary to carry NATO along with it. Americans see the world as a contest between the US and Russia alone; a kind of High Noon with occasional confrontations between the nuclear giants in places like Cuba. But there are other nuclear powers—England and France, for example—and while the US holds an umbrella over Western Europe, West and East also face each other with conventional arms. The United States needs allies. The Soviets have caught up with our once vast lead in arms; there is a rough equivalence now; SALT II, in effect, puts an official seal on it. What Europe wants is preservation of military balance, decline in tension, and reduction in costs. It looks to the United States to continue nuclear equivalency, and detente, too. "I seriously question the possibility of persuading European public opinion to back nuclear and conventional modernization if the US rejects the SALT II treaty," says Paul Thyness, member of the Norwegian parliament and president of the North Atlantic Assembly, a semi-official organization of NATO legislators.

He is the first of the four Europeans—an odd sight before a Senate hearing on American policy. I do not recall a precedent for it. Suppose the Senate in 1919-20 had brought in Europeans in the ugly debate over the League of Nations. What an uproar that would have caused! We were hell-bent back to isolationism and Clemenceau and our former allies were not too sorry to see us go. Sixty years later it is different.

There are four separate accents; besides Thyness there is Dr. Peter Corterier of the German Bundestag, Klaas G. de Vries of the Netherlands, and Patrick Wall, MP, whose British delivery is impressive. Two are Conservatives, two Social Democrats; two in the government, two in opposition; all slightly bemused by America.

Abroad, you see, when the executive negotiates a treaty it zings through parliament. Either that or an election. Canada and the United Kingdom recently held elections. They are parliamentary countries. The election campaigns lasted about six weeks. The United States, by contrast, will inaugurate its next president in January 1981. That's 15 months off. The election began some six months back and is developing ritualistically. The immediate contest is between Carter and Kennedy. The Republican show will heat up soon. It goes on longer but is less fun than baseball. It's hard for Europeans to understand. The gloomy city of Washington is beset by complex problems with a lame-duck president. The solutions demand closest cooperation between executive and legislature. But when Carter proposes a measure (energy, say), it's hard to know if Congress is listening.

"In Europe the parliamentary system of government is prevalent," Thyness tells the senators helpfully, "and since this implies that the government will have to resign if it is voted down on a major issue, European members of parliament very rarely have that freedom to exercise an independent and personal judgment which is a matter of course in the Senate." (He looks at them admiringly.) "I am very much afraid that an adverse vote in the Senate will never really be understood in Europe."

Thyness, like the others, is coolly telling senators the facts. What if SALT II fails? Dr. Corterier says simply, "The difficulties and problems of Western defense would be immeasurably greater."

SALT II has faults, they say, but pass it and follow it with SALT III. There is already a kind of equilibrium of force—what Churchill elegantly called "safety as a sturdy child of terror, and survival as the twin brother of annihilation." Today we call it Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). Patrick Wall, MP, is strongest in his dissatisfaction. He is a former co-chairman of the British Conservative Parliamentary Defense Committee; a rosy-gilled Tory, it seems. The military trend since 1972 "has been wholly in favor of the Soviet Union," he laments. He wants Americans to do whatever is the British equivalent of shaking a leg. But what he really urges, it appears, is more military spending.

Most observers here, after starting out uncertain, concluded that SALT would pass. Now it is all confusion again over the Cuban storm. On this Dr. Corterier's testimony is perhaps the most impressive. Germany yearns for peace, he says. Ratification is not merely a domestic American matter; it touches "the issue of peace in our time—it has decisive bearing on European security." And if SALT fails? "The trust placed in the United States as the leading power within the Alliance will be undermined."

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Comparative Financial Review

	Years ended December 31, 1977	1976
Income		
Life premiums	$22,340,297	$16,150,742
Accident and health premiums	25,683,413	23,593,214
Investment and other income	4,799,481	4,090,525
Total income	52,823,191	43,834,481
Benefits and expenses		
Life claims and other benefits	4,126,231	3,735,055
Accident and health claims	12,430,024	11,644,002
Increase in liability for future policy benefits	12,196,239	8,711,984
Amortization of policy acquisition costs	5,183,133	4,431,061
Commissions	5,943,151	5,224,771
General expenses and insurance taxes	5,869,697	5,652,642
Dividends to policyholders	298,064	299,032
	46,046,539	39,698,547
Income before income taxes and realized investment gains (losses)	6,776,652	4,135,934
Provision for income taxes		
Current	—	—
Deferred	1,909,150	1,209,252
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	4,867,502	2,926,682
Realized investment gains (losses)	11,364	356,057
Net income	$ 4,878,866	$ 3,282,739
Earnings per share		
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	$ 2.88	$ 1.76
Realized investment gains (losses)	.01	.21
Net income	$ 2.89	$ 1.97

Assets	$116,000,000
Insurance in Force	$1,289,599,000

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts, Vol. 181, No. 12, Issue 3376, September 22, 1979. Published weekly (except the issues of July 14, July 28, August 11, September 8) and distributed by The New Republic, Inc., 1220 19th Street, NW Washington, DC 20036. Phone (202) 331-7494. Single copy, $1.00; Yearly subscriptions, $24; foreign, $27; students, $17.

Copyright 1979 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6593). Item g. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide.

Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions, undelivered copies and changes of address to Subscription Service Department, The New Republic, P.O. Box 705, Whitinsville, Mass. 01588. **Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but cannot be considered or returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.**

Cover: Kurdish soldiers cross Mt. Makuk, near Betwatah, in August 1974. Photo by LeRoy Woodson Jr.—Woodfin Camp, Inc. Article on page 18.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
September 22, 1979

The Fat of the Land

When the federal government decided to encourage the settlement of the West at the turn of the last century, it was intended as a populist venture. The idea was to foster the growth of thousands of small family farms by building irrigation projects to provide water to arid lands. Theodore Roosevelt said in signing the Reclamation Act of 1902, "The money is being spent to build up the little man of the West so that no big man from the East can come in to get a monopoly on the water or the land." The law required that no one could own more than 160 acres of federally irrigated land and that the owner had to live on or near the property, to prevent the accumulation of big landholdings owned by absentee landlords. The farmers who settled the new land were not supposed to get a free ride: the law also required them to repay the federal government for the cost of building the water projects.

Anyone who's visited the agricultural regions of the West knows that the reclamation program hasn't turned out the way sponsors envisioned. The ownership restrictions never have been enforced, and farmers have escaped paying back most of the cost of making their land fertile. In 1977 a federal court ruled that the Interior Department would have to begin strictly enforcing the 1902 law. The powerful interests that have grown up during the three-quarters of a century the law has not been enforced quickly went to work to get it repealed. The Senate will vote this week on whether to abandon formally the populist principles behind the original reclamation program.

The bill is sponsored by Senator Frank Church of Idaho and would lift almost all the restrictions on reclamation farmers. The administration has its own bill, which would relax them considerably but at least would pay some heed to the original purposes of the reclamation program. Church's bill has the support of the organizations representing farmers and financial interests in reclamation areas, and it appears to have the support of most of the Senate as well. The House hasn't gotten around to holding hearings on the reclamation bills but probably will be considerably less sympathetic to totally scrapping the old law.

The court decision giving new life to the old 160-acre limitation outraged big farmers on reclamation land, who had comfortably evaded the law for decades and made lots of money doing it. As if that weren't bad enough, another court overturned a dubious Interior Department ruling of 1933 that California's Imperial Valley, which federal water has turned into the lushest agricultural area in the world, was legally exempt from the ownership restrictions. Other courts ruled that several districts served by Army Corps of Engineers projects also fell under these regulations. In a matter of months, the courts revived the vision of the 1902 Act. The Department of Agriculture estimated that more than a million acres would have to be sold as "excess land" as a result of the court decisions.

The reclamation program has lived up to the warning of a congressional opponent during the 1902 debate that it was nothing more than "a scheme of speculators and land grabbers to loot the National Treasury for private profit." The program did create a lot of new farmland—11 million acres so far. But it has not served the populist aims of the original sponsors, and it has not cost the government nothing. The 160-acre limit has been evaded through loopholes in the Interior Department's regulations enforcing it. The Interior Department quit enforcing the residency requirement at all in 1926, on a fancy legal rationale that was finally rejected by courts in 1977. In California's Westlands Water District, several corporations own thousands of acres, and one—the Southern Pacific Land Company—owns 109,000. In the Imperial Valley, more than two-thirds of the land is owned by absentee landlords. The average farm there is more than 700 acres, and twenty percent of Imperial farms exceed 1000 acres.

Nor has the reclamation program ever been self-supporting, as it was supposed to be. Instead of being

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required to pay for benefits provided by the federal projects, reclamation farmers have gotten fat subsidies. The cost of the projects was supposed to be paid off by the farmers who benefited from them over 10 years, interest free. Inflation combined with repeated extensions of the repayment period by a friendly Congress have dramatically eased this burden. Farmers now have 40 years to repay the capital costs of their water projects (after a 10-year grace period), and they have to pay only as much as they can afford, as determined by the Bureau of Reclamation. In some districts farmers pay as little as three percent of construction costs.

Farmers also pay only a fraction of the cost of delivering the irrigation water to their property. In Westlands, for example, a 1968 contract sets the rate for most of the water at $7.50 per acre-foot. (An acre-foot is 326,000 gallons, the amount needed to cover one acre with one foot of water.) This rate is frozen until the year 2008, with no adjustment for inflation. Even now the $7.50 rate covers only about a third of the cost of delivery. The Interior Department says all the subsidies to Westlands farmers add up to $770 million, or $1540 per acre.

Organizations representing big California growers have portrayed the bill offered by Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus as a draconian measure. One group even took out newspaper ads picturing a hapless-looking family who sadly inform the reader, "Just a few weeks ago, the government told us they are going to take away our land." It turned out, though, that the family pictured in the ad would not have to give up any of its land under the administration's bill. In fact, under the proposed rules, this family would be allowed to double the amount of reclamation land it farms. Actually the Andrus proposal is pretty mild stuff. A family of two or more would be allowed to own and lease up to 960 acres, provided it didn't own more than 640. Only the biggest farms would be affected by enforcement of this law (compared to the present nonenforcement of the 160-acre rule). The Andrus bill also would exempt present owners from the residency requirement, applying it only to subsequent buyers. But it would require periodic renegotiation of water rates to adjust for inflation, which would force farmers to pay a bigger share of the delivery cost.

Even continuing the subsidy of reclamation farmers at its current level and leaving most land holdings alone isn't enough for the big farmers and agribusiness concerns who benefit from the reclamation program. They have rallied behind the Church bill, which would permit farms of up to 1280 acres. It would also abolish the residency requirement. Most outrageous, it would completely exempt the Imperial Valley and the Corps of Engineers projects from all land ownership rules. The Church bill also permits water districts to buy their way out of all federal restrictions only by repaying the federal government's capital costs in one lump sum. But since the alleged "full payment" includes no interest on money that has been owing (and eroding in value) for decades, it amounts to a tremendous gift from the taxpayer to large farmers.

Even Andrus's proposal neglects the real scandal, which is the subsidies themselves. Besides their direct cost of billions of dollars, the subsidies have several bad side effects. The low water rates contributed to the 1977 drought in California, since they encouraged farmers to use it profligately. In Westlands, for example, the water is effectively two-thirds free. The Imperial Irrigation District uses nearly twice as much water every year as the entire population of New York city, much more than it needs to. The General Accounting Office says more than half of reclamation water is wasted through overwatering. The subsidies work at cross purposes to other federal farm programs. Even as the Department of Agriculture is paying farmers not to grow some crops, the Department of the Interior is subsidizing the production of those same crops. Forty percent of reclamation land is used to grow crops covered by USDA price support programs. Farmers in other parts of the country are at an unfair disadvantage compared to those on reclamation land, since they don't have the advantage of subsidized irrigation. Between 1975 and 1976, the US farm population shrank by seven percent, but the farm population on federally irrigated land actually rose. In effect the government is putting efficient farms out of business for the benefit of comparatively inefficient ones.

The modest program begun in 1902 has grown into an expensive boondoggle which profits only a few thousand reclamation farmers. President Carter has the right idea in trying to cut back the construction of new dams and water projects by the federal government, but he has done nothing to pare the costs of the existing ones. He could do so by keeping the original 160-acre limit and giving the reclamation farmers a choice between either complying or agreeing to pay back their full share of capital costs, including interest. This measure would lower the cost of the program, reduce the advantage reclamation farmers have over their counterparts elsewhere, encourage conservation of increasingly scarce western water, and promote more family farms. The Church bill, by contrast, would channel ever-increasing public funds to big farms and encourage the spread of large farms owned by absentee landlords. Neither bill would attack the biggest flaw in the reclamation program—the huge subsidies involved. But Carter's bill would at least improve matters a little. Church's bill would make them immeasurably worse.

Kennedy's Code

Senator Kennedy's ritual of speaking in tongues about his presidential ambitions serves his own interests and those of the press. But it disserves the Democratic party. And it gives us no confidence that a new

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Correspondence

Conservative endorsements

To the editors:

In Ken Bode's article "Dumpsters Convention" (*TNR*, July 7 & 14), he wrote that California ADA had endorsed Republican Evelle Younger for governor in 1978. This is an error. California ADA does not endorse conservatives, whether Republican or Democratic, and therefore made no endorsement for governor in 1978.

Shirley Wechsler
Executive Director
Americans for Democratic Action
Studio City, California

Who owns your score?

To the editors:

In "Evening the Score" (*TNR*, August 25), Barbara Demick examines one of a pair of swindles worked on the American public: that the interests of science and economy demand that standardized test questions and the "correct" answers be kept secret after the tests, as well as before.

A second swindle concerns the testing companies' other commodity, comprehensive information about the nation's students. When the student receives his score and copies are sent to the colleges of his choice, he has gotten what he paid for, but the value of the transaction to the testing company has just begun. The score is now a commodity detached from the test-taker, deposited in the data bank beyond his reach where it can be used for financial benefit to others and for purposes over which he had no control.

First, as Demick points out, testing companies use results to demonstrate to client institutions that the scores accurately predict the performance of the freshman class. Other uses are not so well known. With the same individual taking different tests and completing different surveys at various stages of his academic career it would not be surprising if testers sometimes combined files for more extensive studies. And in fact, unknown to test-takers and without their express consent, two companies, with funds from the US Office of Education, did link several tests and a survey for the high school class of 1975 for a study of student "decision-making."

It is true that individually identifiable scores will not be released, but research results may bear on groups—minorities or majorities—in which those studied have an interest.

In seeking to put a brake on psychometrics, one approach is to breach present secrecy. Another may be to determine the rightful owners of test scores. Do the scores belong to the test-takers, with the right ultimately, once the initial purpose of the scores has been served, to choose not to be the subject of further research?

It is important to be clear about what business the testing companies are really in. They develop and sell tests, to be sure, but they are also in the information business, developing and selling information about you and me and our children. Limit their rights to the data and you also limit the scope of their operations. Indeed, from the perspective of information as a commodity, validity studies performed by testing companies may constitute nothing more than market research, a company proving the adequacy of its product—information about people.

Joseph Turner
Washington, DC

A bushel and a peck?

To the editors:

Robert Sherrill writes in his review of *Merchants of Grain* (*TNR*, August 18) that Russia will import 15 million bushels of wheat this year. He means 15 million tons. Half a million metric tons comes to roughly 18 million bushels. Fifteen million tons equals roughly 540 million bushels—quite a difference!

Arthur Weiss
Jackson Heights, New York

The intent and effect of pornography

To the editors:

I couldn't help laughing over Robin Morgan's review of Angela Carter's book *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (*TNR*, September 1 & 8). Is anyone really in a position to say "all pornography is propaganda" or "pornography assumes and propagates the notion that a brutal human nature cannot be modified by social change"?

It seems to me that these tortured commentaries on the so-called "ideology of pornography" merely propagate the notion that modern-day purveyors of smut consciously imbue their work with social and political theories. This may be true of Sade, but ask any porno king or "adult bookstore" proprietor whether "a brutal human nature can be modified by social change" and you'll likely get a blank stare.

Morgan, Carter and others apparently confuse intent and effect. Coat hangers are often used as substitute car radio antennae, but that is not why they are manufactured. Most pornography books, pictures, or films these days are politically neutral "artifacts" that exist becaue people will pay money for them. The people who produce them couldn't care less if they are used for masturbating, wrapping fish, or writing books.

William Poling
Silver Spring, Maryland

Rough times ahead

To the editors:

I have been a subscriber to *TNR* since 1961. Although I have not always agreed with the editorial positions, I have always found the articles worthwhile. However, the Washington Diarist item on Arthur Fiedler (*TNR*, August 25) was juvenile as well as revolting in its expression of relief at his passing. Whether Michael Kinsley enjoyed Fiedler's music or not, the comment takes the low road. If this is an example of his new stewardship as editor, then *TNR* is in for rough times.

Robert A. Nover, MD
Bethesda, Maryland

Mathematical lingo

To the editors:

I enjoyed your editorial, "Saudi Blackmail" (*TNR*, August 18). However, you really must be more careful in your choice of words. "Will allowing the PLO to set the new *parameters*. . . ."

Parameters, a math term, is not a sub-

(continued on page 55)

The editors welcome correspondence from TNR's readers. Letters intended for publication should include the correspondent's full name, address, and telephone number, should be typed double-spaced, and held to under 200 words. Longer letters may be abridged due to lack of space.

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Kennedy presidency would be the breath of fresh air his supporters long for.

The truth seems to be that for the past six months, when Kennedy was saying he expected President Carter to win and expected to support him, he actually was thinking about running against President Carter. Now that he says he hasn't decided yet, this means he's planning to run, depending on how badly Carter stumbles in the next few months. Why can't he just say what he means?

One reason is that what Kennedy is doing is just a more elaborate version of the standard minuet between reporters and politicians with presidential ambitions. If the politicians took to saying what they meant, the reporters would have nothing to "interpret" and "analyze." So a conspiracy of obfuscation grows up. The politicians, knowing that every remark they make about their intentions automatically is pushed up a notch through "interpretation," adjust what they say accordingly.

The obfuscation is useful to the politicians, too. It permits them to withdraw gracefully if events or their plans change. It permits them to build up strength while remaining a shadowy target for counterattacks. It would be impolitic in every sense for Senator Kennedy to be seen openly waiting around for President Carter's situation to get worse. Far better to adopt a coy, distracted posture.

But this posture does Kennedy no credit, for two reasons. First, his half-shadowy presence discourages the emergence of other liberal alternatives to Carter and to the wisp of smoke from California. If he ultimately decides not to run, he will have left the political values he supports—this journal's values, too, most of them—without a spokesman.

More fundamentally, saying that you expect to support President Carter when you actually are plotting to run against him, then saying you haven't decided in order to convey the impression to supporters that you really have, is lying. It's petty lying, transparent lying, absolutely conventional lying, but lying nevertheless. It's not a promising start.

White House Watch

The Bottom Line

On August 20, four days after Benjamin Civiletti became the new US attorney general, he telephoned former assistant attorney general Mitchell Rogovin and asked him whether he'd consider returning to the Justice Department as deputy attorney general. The press customarily identifies Rogovin as "a respected Washington attorney," which he is. He told Civiletti that he would reply by letter. He said in the letter that he'd just been in New York, discussing with federal prosecutors there the terms on which felony indictments of one of his clients for income tax evasion and obstruction of justice might be reduced to misdemeanor charges. In the circumstances, Rogovin wrote, any further discussion of his becoming Civiletti's deputy should be deferred. At this writing, no deputy has been chosen.

The foregoing coincidence is one of several bizarre elements in a situation that has led to Hamilton Jordan being publicly charged with sniffing cocaine at a plush and sleazy Manhattan joint called Studio 54. Jordan, aged 34, is Carter's chief political strategist and the chief of the White House staff. Other Carter assistants who deal with politicians around the country know all too well that the populace tends to believe anything bad that is said about Jordan. As an assistant who admires Jordan put it the other day, significant numbers of people feel that they are "diminished" by Jordan's continuing presence and role at the White House. Carter is responsible for Jordan's presence and role. The cocaine business is bad news for Carter, Jordan, and the country. It comes when Carter has enough trouble, administratively and politically, without being dogged by this sort of stuff. How our system of justice, lawyers, the media, the President's people, and the President himself bring about and perpetuate this sort of stuff is the burden of this report.

Newsweek's September 10 issue described Studio 54 as "a hip-chic disco with tax problems and an unsavory reputation among narcotics officers." The owners are Steve Rubell, 36, and Ian Schrager, 32. Federal agents raided Studio 54 and seized its records last December 14. The owners' lawyers—Rogovin for Schrager, a New York attorney named Robert Kasanof, and Roy Cohn of Senator Joseph McCarthy ill-fame for Rubell and Studio 54—began almost immediately to bargain with the prosecutors assigned to the case in the office of Robert Fiske, the US attorney for the southern district of New York. They were still bargaining when Rubell and Schrager were indicted last June 28 on charges of obstructing justice and "skimming"—that is, concealing and failing to report for federal tax purposes—some $2.5 million of Studio 54 income. Rubell and Schrager are scheduled for trial November 12 before US district judge Richard Owen. Owen recently refused the defendants' request that he postpone the trial.

Contradictory accounts of what brought Jordan into the mess must be noted. Rogovin said to me and said in substance on a Washington television program: "The US attorney's office in New York began discussions with us about a possible plea arrangement. The essence of the plea arrangement was whether our clients would cooperate with the government in a variety of ways. One of the things the government sought was names and information relating to the use of drugs at Studio 54." In this context Rogovin continued, "the fact that people said they saw him, Hamilton Jordan using drugs at the Studio was to my way of thinking a very

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significant allegation and was brought forward with that in mind. The government was seeking this type of cooperation. They raised the issue. They set the boundaries. And there was no question that it was to our advantage because it was part of a plea arrangement." Rogovin also said it was all done under an agreed "ground rule." The gist of the rule, he said, was that the prosecutors would take any cooperation by the defendants into account in determining the level of the charges and, absent an agreed plea level, would not subpoena the defendants and witnesses supporting their charge against Jordan.

The federal rebuttal follows. The defendants' lawyers, including Cohn, who is now saying he's against plea bargaining, initiated the attempts to get their clients off with misdemeanor charges before the felony charges were brought. The prosecutors never accepted Rogovin's and Kasanof's proposed ground rule. Federal prosecutors don't go after and normally are not interested in individual users of illicit drugs, including cocaine, or even in small-time dealers in drugs. The feds go after big importers, big dealers, and suppliers to dealers. It is quite plain from both sides' accounts that the New York prosecutors sought and welcomed and might well have paid with reduced charges for any usable information about major trafficking in drugs at Studio 54. Hints are around that the prosecutors still hope for such information and are ready to pay for it in courtroom coin.

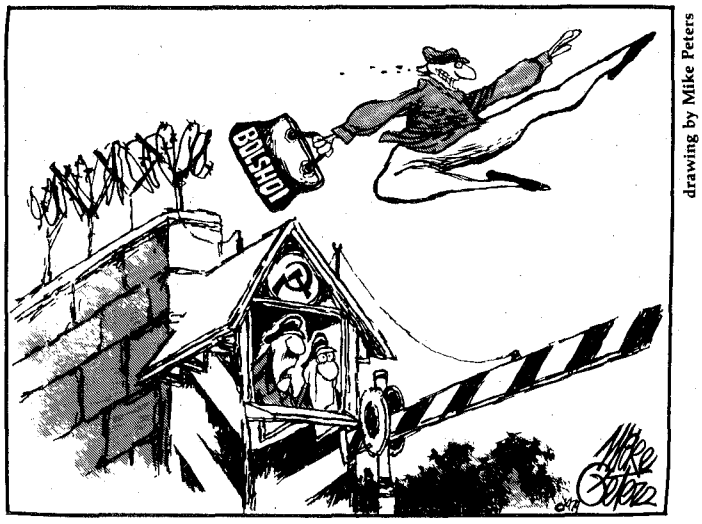
Now to Jordan and how he got into it. There is evidence too varied for detailed accounting here that the Studio 54 owners, particularly Rubell, have been gossiping for months that Jordan visited Studio 54 at various times in 1978, and snorted cocaine there. This was said to have happened first in April and then in August 1978, and finally on the only date Jordan says he was at Studio 54. Rogovin and Kasanof said in their first allegation to the New York prosecutors that Press Secretary Jody Powell accompanied Jordan to Studio 54 in April 1978 and watched him sniff cocaine. Powell believably says that he's never been at Studio 54. Jordan says that he's never used cocaine or any other drugs there or anywhere else. The shifts in timing from rumor to rumor support Powell's assertion that somebody is adjusting the charge against Jordan to offset White House rebuttals.

Most news accounts encourage the impression that Jordan and maybe other White House characters sneaked off sometime or other to Studio 54. That certainly was not the case on June 27, 1978, the one evening Jordan admits to having been there. Jordan, chairman Evan Dobelle of the Carter-Mondale election committee, and Tim Kraft, then an assistant to Jordan and now the committee's campaign manager, attended a dinner that evening for some 50 to 60 past or potential Democratic campaign contributors at the 21 Club, a New York restaurant of good repute. Jordan addressed the dinner. Afterward, according to Dobelle, he and Jordan and Kraft and "quite a large party" of others at the dinner hared off to Studio 54. Dobelle and Kraft acknowledge that Jordan was not with them and in their sight every minute. But they say he just couldn't have sneaked off to a basement corner and obtained and sniffed cocaine, as charged.

Rubell is quoted as saying he saw Jordan obtain a couple of sniffs, one for each nostril, from a petty dealer known as Johnny C, and snort the same. Rubell later taped Johnny C saying as much, and gave the tape to Kasanof and Rogovin. They'll give it to the feds when and if the feds reduce the felony charges or otherwise ease matters for Rubell and Schrager.

Comes now Barry Landau, a New York public relations type known for claiming connections he doesn't have. He says he knows Jordan, met him that night at Studio 54, and steered him to a cocaine supplier. He says he didn't see Jordan snort cocaine. The next morning Landau telephoned Jordan's executive assistant, Eleanor Connors, and said he'd been with Jordan the previous evening. Connors assumed that Landau had been at the fund dinner. She therefore paid attention when Landau asked her to come up with a telegram from the President to actress Lucie Arnaz, praising and thanking her for appearing in a revival of *Annie Get Your Gun* for the benefit of New York City. In an uncharacteristic lapse of good sense, Connors with Jordan's approval sent the requested telegram. When published it seemed to verify Landau's claim to be buddies with Jordan and other Carterites.

The attorney general is required by law to decide within 90 days of the filing of the original allegation whether to ask a judge to appoint a special prosecutor to proceed against Jordan. Here comes the totally outrageous part. The cocaine charge has nothing to do with the charges against Rubell and Schrager. Whether a single, individual use of cocaine is a prosecutable federal offense is debatable and debated among attorneys. Rogovin knows this. He said in a Washington TV broadcast: ". . . the question of whether or not it's a prosecutable offense doesn't strike me as being as significant as the fact that, if true, the chief of staff went into a disco, asked a number of



drawing by Mike Peters

I saw Nureyev do a better one at the Romanian border.

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people he didn't know to provide cocaine, and used the cocaine in the presence of people he didn't know. To my way of thinking, that's irresponsibility of the highest order."

Irresponsibility takes various forms, some of them known to respected lawyers.

John Osborne

Put psychiatry back in its place.

The Expanding Shrink

It was the eighth inning. The batter had struck out for the fourth consecutive time and Howard Cosell was explaining how this merely proved that the batter had lost his confidence, his concentration, and worst of all, the psychological momentum. Besides, he stood little chance against a pitcher who, recently married, was displaying his newly acquired stability and maturity. Now why didn't he just say that it was a wicked curve that dropped three feet as it creased the outside corner of the plate? Why the lecture about confidence, momentum, and stability? Because, like many commentators nowadays, he was assuming that psychological abstraction yields deep understanding and shows great sophistication. A description of the trajectory of the pitch would have been visible, accessible, and therefore shallow; commentary must demonstrate that what happens is the inevitable manifestation, the inexorable result, of underlying psychic causes. The viewer is mired in epiphenomena, chained to the mere appearance of things. The role of the commentator is to correct that epistemological error by revealing the underlying currents of mood, motive, and all things similarly imperceptible and suitably psychological.

This bit of Freud illustrates our growing obsession with abstraction—in particular, with psychological abstraction—for processing and making sense of the world.

Consider a more serious case: a terrorist attack rather blandly described in a recent news report as "an expression of frustration and resentment" on the part of terrorists. Since this particular attack had no discernible military or propaganda value, the correspondent was left without the more traditional explanations. Feeling perhaps that leaving any act unexplained borders on journalistic irresponsibility, the writer resorted to a hydraulic theory of action, where murder results from an overflow of intrapsychic tensions and terrorism is a form of emotional incontinence. Of course, even as psychology this will not do. For why do some people respond to "frustration and resentment" with depression and suicide, others with drugs and alochol, others with silence and acceptance, and still others with rocket-launched grenades aimed at innocents?

These two tiny pieces of reportage are minor triumphs for psychohistory. This discipline usually has been devoted to exposing the psychic springs of great and troubled historical actors and restricted to a small audience of literati. But it has increasingly become the common currency of sportscasters, political commentators, and all kinds of interpreters of the world. President Carter's declaration that we are suffering from a national malaise is just one prominent recent example of attempts to psychoanalyze the whole country. Newspaper reporters and columnists conduct daily readings of the national mood. The entire view of the national body politic as some huge neurotic psyche with headlines for symptoms testifies to the ascendancy of psychological determinism as our favorite explanatory principle.

Cynics say that there is no national malaise, just a shortage of gasoline; that there is no national mood, just the very personal moods of very many people, none of whom has a compartment within his emotive structures labeled "national." They go on to assert that psychology itself should have remained in the rat laboratory and never been allowed to explain individual human behavior, let alone history or politics. But there is an obvious utility to psychologizing politics. If the problem is a shortage of gasoline or a decline in disposable income, then the solution is to provide more gas or reduce inflation. If the problem is a crisis of confidence, then the solution is reassurance. And since psychic soothing is easier than gasoline rationing, it becomes the solution.

The technique—perfected by physicians in the prescientific age when they had no remedies—is to tailor the diagnosis to fit the available cure. Its use is not restricted to presidents. Congressional campaigns use slogans like "he cares" and "he listens." They offer group psychotherapy with all of its trappings: unconditional regard for the patient/voter (". . . the wisdom, decency, goodness of the American people . . . "), total accessibility ("Your congressman is *there* when you need him"), equal partnership ("I pledge to work with you . . . "). Most important, they offer a firm avoidance of any promise to act. Meanwhile, the media have begun offering their own therapeutic services, promising, for example, to "be your friend." In one particularly ludicrous version of this theme, a Boston radio station appropriated the most popular current cliché, "We hear you," as its own advertising slogan. Psychologists, perhaps sensing an invasion of their own turf, have launched a determined offensive of their own, inundating bookstores with self-help tomes masquerading as science and demonstrating that the only obstacle on the road to joy, fortune, power, and perfect sex is a deficient understanding and underdeveloped control of the mind.

Describing events in terms of economic determinism,

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class conflict, or any of the other classical unseen hands of 19th-century political theory is out of fashion in the United States today. Into the ideological breach, with its trappings of science, pretensions to objectivity, and bias toward individualism, stepped psychology. Major political events like the Kennedy assassinations and the Vietnam War were given a context: they became evidence that we were "a sick society." Psychologization reached its pinnacle after the Jonestown massacre. For weeks one could scarcely gaze at a newspaper or telecast without being sternly lectured by a doctor of psychology of its meaning and origins. To some it represented repressed aggression in a world of intolerance, to others permissiveness gone wild in a world without structure. For some it was a quintessentially American act, for others a mere aberration. Many droned on about spiritual desolation, societal atomization, and desperate searching for secular salvation. (Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millenium* documents that similar cults were prevalent in the Middle Ages, a time very different from ours and one when the handy clichés of modern secularism do not apply, but never mind.) With a ritual (though sometimes contradictory) chorus of psychologization, the doctors shepherded us with a minimum of pain and thought through what they were quick to reassure us was a normal "grief reaction."

As Willard Gaylin of the Hastings Institute of Life Sciences points out, the vogue for facile psychohistory produces a dangerous confusion between the "inner" and "outer" man. The inner man, all but invisible until the 20th century, is the really good boy inside of every killer. He was battered by father, repressed by mother, tortured, suppressed, and never got out. We now see him as the real person. The outer man is the one who acts in the world. Saint, sinner, or in between, he is now seen as a shadow of the real person—transformed, often beyond recognition, by fate, society, and the awesome forces of the unconscious. The inner-outer man paradox not only implies attenuated responsibility, it trivializes human action. It exculpates the vicious and, in a curiously egalitarian way, debunks the virtuous. How much, we must now ask, of Gladstone's zeal for reform and rectitude was merely pathetic defense against powerfully repressed and peculiar inner desires? Was the Reformation merely Luther's way of resolving his anal conflicts? Was Stalin acting for some reasons of Oedipal striving, emotional incontinence, or perhaps a deficiency of maternal reinforcement?

This type of explanation is appropriate to the psychiatrist's couch, but is dangerous when it infects moral and political discourse. Psychiatrists have a unique task and must make unique assumptions. Their task is to heal by unraveling the more uncontrollable forces in a patient's life. They assume that the important phenomena are unconscious; and, for the purpose of therapy, they focus primarily on these unconscious forces. These are appropriate assumptions for one with no mandate other than psychological understanding and healing and for whom moral judgment is inappropriate, if not irrelevant.

When mechanistic psychology escapes the therapist's office and enters everyday thinking and speech, problems arise because of the exceedingly fine line between understanding and forgiveness. *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*. This is particularly true since all modern psychologies claim a base in science, the test of which is predictability and the premise of which is logical connectedness and inevitability. Psychoanalysts and behaviorists may argue over the identity of proximal and ultimate causes, but they agree that, as in other sciences, events are tied together in inexorable chains of causation. Therefore, when science is applied to explain human behavior, it produces the same free-will problem that plagued theological determinism. If all can, in principle, be explained mechanistically in the same way that one can predict the fall of a stone under gravity, then how can one render judgment?

This is a difficult question with crucial implications for criminal law. It lies at the heart of debates about mental illness, responsibility, and guilt. Common law has long struggled with the notion that some kinds of action are outside the will of the person and attributable to causes beyond his control. In modern times we call these causes mental defects. There may be arguments over what conditions are or are not mental defects, but some cases are clear. Take, for example, an assault by a person hallucinating after an accidental ingestion of LSD. Most would ascribe the act not to the person but to outside forces and therefore would exempt the person from the usual moral and legal sanctions. When we move to the case of severely deranged behavior in the absence of physical damage to the brain—schizophrenia, for example—the traditional view holds that the individual's responsibility is attenuated as in the LSD case. The radical libertarian view, put forward most vigorously by Thomas Szasz, holds that diagnosis is irrelevant—even invalid—and that the individual is responsible. But this debate about the need for demonstrable brain damage is a debate over where, not whether, to draw the line. When we universalize the notion of external causation and create a psychopathology of everyday life, we run the risk of abolishing the line altogether and placing all action into the same category.

Not everybody is fooled. Last year when a murder defendant in Florida claimed he had been made insane by watching violence on television, the defense never got past the jury; it found the accused guilty. Perhaps the recognition is growing that psychology simply provides one of many possible perspectives. Human events, like physical events, can be viewed at many levels of abstraction, each providing a window on the world. To restrict our view to a single window is to invite partial truths. And psychological half-truths can be particularly dangerous because they are attended by

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a demonology that frightens and subdues the uninitiated while legitimizing a priesthood of diviners who interpret the obvious and exorcise the invisible. At the same time, the psychologized view of the world carries with it a pernicious reductionism that debases and deforms moral discourse.

A century ago, somewhere between classical history and traditional philosophy, was born, with modest claims, psychology. It now waits to be anointed queen of the sciences. The rush to honor that fraudulent claim is a form of intellectual idolatry that seriously threatens our thinking and sensibilities.

Charles Krauthammer

Charles Krauthammer is a psychiatrist in Washington, DC.

The case of the missing footnotes.

Conspiracies' End

The recently released Bantam Extra edition of the report of the Select Committee on Assassinations of the US House of Representatives is a bulky document, 792 pages long, optimistically entitled the *Final Assassinations Report*. Were it not for 254 mysteriously missing footnotes covering part of the text discussing an alleged St. Louis-based conspiracy against Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the book easily would have exceeded 800 pages. Assassinologists no doubt will investigate further the missing footnotes, but meanwhile I am inclined to put them in the "suspicious" category, along with all those "mysterious deaths" that accumulated after the assassination of President Kennedy.

This two-and-a-half-year, $5.4-million congressional investigation (the most expensive such investigation ever, according to one report) has many good things in it, indicating an inquiry conducted with due thoroughness and skepticism. But it also has some preposterous claims, suggesting that the committee, chaired by Representative Louis Stokes of Ohio, was determined at the same time to produce findings of conspiracy.

It is remarkable how little attention has been paid to these sensational findings, a neglect which suggests their tenuousness. How many people, for example, are even faintly aware that "there is a likelihood that" James Earl Ray assassinated King as a result of this St. Louis conspiracy? Hardly anyone, according to my private polling.

This purported conspiracy hangs from a slender thread—the testimony of one G. Russell Byers, who told the committee in 1978 that in 1966 or 1967 a St. Louis patent attorney named John Sutherland offered him $50,000 to kill King. Byers told this story to a friend in 1973. The friend turned out to be an FBI informer, who filed a report. The report in turn was misfiled by the FBI, but it eventually found its way to the House Committee in 1978.

It also found its way to the *New York Times*, whereupon three *Times* reporters wrote a series of lengthy, prominently displayed stories, whose effect was inevitably to lend credence to the claim of conspiracy. Byers was described by the *Times* team as "a former auto parts dealer." But, many paragraphs later, on an inside page, the following stared out at the reader: "Mr. Byers was implicated as a buyer of stolen goods in an investigation involving the theft last spring of a well-known Frederick Remington bronze sculpture, the 'Bronco Buster,' but prosecutors later dropped the charges." The story also said that both Sutherland and the man who allegedly introduced him to Byers were now dead. In the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, Byers was less flatteringly described as "a convicted automobile thief." And, even worse, "according to one of his former attorneys" he was "one of the most dangerous criminals in St. Louis." (Unusual to find lawyers talking about their clients in this way.)

Now, I don't know a great deal about the law, but I have worked in a district attorney's office long enough to know that when someone with a criminal record comes forward, wishing to tell the government about a famous crime, then his story should be regarded with extreme suspicion. I should admit here that the DA's office in question was Jim Garrison's in New Orleans at the time of his famous investigation of the Kennedy assassination. While I was there, I had to read dozens of letters—and for some reason such letters were nearly always handwritten in pencil on lined writing paper—in which the writer claimed to be in possession of sensational knowledge about the Kennedy assassination. At the end of the letter there would be his name—and prison serial number.

In particular, one learned to be wary of people against whom criminal charges were pending. The House Committee report conceded that Byer's "criminal record raised substantial doubts concerning his credibility," and went on to say that in 1974 Byers ran into his attorney (the same one?) in the courthouse, at which time "Byers asked his advice on the procedures for gaining immunity in a grand jury investigation. . . ."

When Byers testified before the House Committee, it was under the following circumstances:

> *After consulting with his attorney, Byers agreed to cooperate, but only in response to a subpoena and if he were granted immunity. A subpoena was issued, and when Byers appeared before an executive session of the committee on May 9, 1978, he was granted immunity under Title II of the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970. Byers' testimony in committee public hearings was also given under an immunity grant. (215)*

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As assassination conspiracy theorists are wont to say, the "unanswered question" here is whether Byers simultaneously "immunized" himself against other possible prosecutions, unrelated to the King case. I turned to the back of the book to look up footnote 215, but as related, it was missing, as were all the other Byers footnotes. Another conspiracy?

Even conceding that John Sutherland did put a bounty on King's head, what evidence is there that this offer was transmitted to James Earl Ray? (The committee conclusively shows that Ray really did shoot King, incidentally.) Almost none. Byers's brother-in-law, John Paul Spica, was in the Missouri State Penitentiary at the same time as Ray, but "the committee found no evidence to contradict denials of both Spica and Byers that the Sutherland-Kauffman offer was discussed prior to the assassination."

In short, this is all very tenuous evidence on which to assert a "likelihood" that King was killed as a result of a conspiracy. This is all the more disappointing because the remainder of the committee's work on the King assassination is in many ways excellent. The congressmen were plainly reluctant to accept the conclusion that a small-time criminal like Ray was responsible for killing so prominent a public figure as King. Their finding that he did indeed pull the trigger (and financed his subsequent escape by robbing banks) is thus all the more persuasive.

One section of the King report in particular is worth singling out, demonstrating as it does an investigative flair not often found in the annals of assassinology. Since 1968 Ray has consistently claimed that he was assisted by a mysterious "Raoul," who "according to Ray, directed him at every incriminating stage prior to the murder of Dr. King." The committee argues persuasively that "Raoul" was really a disguised allusion to one or another of Ray's brothers, Jerry or John, both of whom probably assisted Ray at various stages after he escaped from prison. The committee's conclusion was that Ray's "post-assassination tale of Raoul was fabricated to conceal contacts with one or both brothers." It seems to me that this was as far as the King conspiracy went. If only the committee had stopped there.

Turning now with a heavy heart to the Kennedy assassination (will this quagmire of Zapruder film frames and puffs of smoke from the grassy knoll never end?), one finds very much the same story. Many ghosts are laid to rest—including that of old Abe Zapruder, now deceased, and nothing mysterious there, I hope—many unworthy rumors scotched; much diligent investigation; but in the end the same desperate grasping at the straws of conspiracy.

No fewer than five congressmen filed "separate remarks" or "dissents" from the findings. Congressman Robert Edgar of Pennsylvania appends to his dissent a remarkable document, Exhibit A, showing how the committee's findings underwent drastic revision in the final two weeks of the inquiry. In the draft report of December 13, 1978, the committee concluded: "There is insufficient evidence to find that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy." But by December 29, there was a different story. "Scientific acoustical evidence establishes a high probability that 2 gunmen fired at President John F. Kennedy. . . . The committee believes, on the basis of evidence available to it, that President John F. Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of conspiracy."

In these final two weeks the committee heard testimony about a dictabelt which had been found in a Dallas Police Department closet. It contained a recording made on the day of the assassination from a police motorcycle whose microphone was stuck on the "transmit" position. Congressman Harold Sawyer's rebuttal of the tremendous conspiratorial load that this dictabelt has been made to carry is devastating:

> *To the unaided ear, the dictabelt appears to contain only the noise of a motorcycle, at one point the faint noise of sirens and at another the faint ringing of chimes. Nowhere on it is there any noise or series of noises even suggesting gunfire. No acoustical expert has testified that even his trained ear had detected such. All of the acoustical expert opinions are based upon the tape or print-out of a computer showing three groupings of oscilloscope-like stylus amplitude markings which remain after the filtering out of the motorcycle noise from the dictabelt. . . . Dr. James E. Barger, the committee's initial acoustical expert, was unable to say with either certainty, or any degree of conviction, that the bursts of amplitude shown on the computer tape were in fact either gunshots or even sounds similar to gunshots.*

But the committee concluded, following the testimony of two more acoustics experts, that these bursts of amplitude were gunshots, and that one of them was 95 percent certain to have come from the grassy knoll.

There is considerable evidence that the motorcycle from whose microphone the dictabelt was recorded was not even in Dealey Plaza at the time. The dictabelt evidence seems extremely ropey, and may dissolve entirely if it is further scrutinized by the National Academy of Sciences, as the committee recommends.

Then, heaven help us, we have the Lee Harvey Oswald-David Ferrie connection, dredged up from Garrison's investigation. There never was any credible evidence that Oswald even knew Ferrie, a superannuated airline pilot from New Orleans, but the committee seems hypnotized by the fact that Ferrie knew Carlos Marcello, the Louisiana tomato salesman and reputed Mafia boss. Years ago, when Jim Garrison came out with his assorted linkages and called them a conspiracy, the heavy artillery of the press pounded away at the eccentric DA—with some justice, as I ruefully noted at the time from my precarious vantage point in his office. Where is that artillery today, now that we are confronted with the same implausible linkages, this time under congressional sponsorship? I hear some distant thunder from the provinces—Norfolk, Virginia; St Louis, Missouri—but (except for a fuming

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editorial in the *Star*), not so much as a popgun discharged in New York or Washington.

I suppose there is a certain weariness with the whole subject. The pro-conspiracy theorists have always been the biggest noisemakers in the assassination arena. Now they can go home happy, with their conspiracies congressionally certified, and perhaps they will be quiet from now on. If so, it was $5.4 million well spent.

Tom Bethell

Tom Bethell is a Washington editor of *Harper's* and a contributing editor of the *Washington Monthly*.

Twice in one week.

Outfoxed by Fidel

The nasty truth is that the Carter administration has been had by the Cubans and the Russians in two major political situations this month. Both of these debacles could have been avoided if the US simply had used its head and its tools of intelligence and diplomacy.

I am referring both to the "discovery" of the small Soviet combat force in Cuba, an event abysmally mishandled by the White House on every level, and to the Havana summit conference of the so-called "Non-Aligned Movement," which happened to have been held at the same time. At that meeting the US, to put it charitably, was clobbered as never before by the wily Fidel Castro and his third world allies, with the Russians in the wings loving every moment of it.

The two situations seem unrelated, but a political and psychological nexus exists between them. Unlike the US, the Cubans and the Soviets have evolved a coherent world policy. There are Soviet combat troops in Cuba as part of a comprehensive plan by these two communist governments to continue unfolding a joint policy of capturing, if they can, the leadership of the third world through political action and support for revolutionary movements everywhere.

The reason Moscow maintains (or rotates) combat units in Cuba is to improve the jungle and tropical warfare skills of its own forces and to achieve—through joint maneuvers in a well-protected environment—better coordination with the Cubans. Russian and Cuban troops already have operated jointly in Angola, Ethiopia, and South Yemen—without US interference. At the Havana meeting, Carter admitted for the first time that Cuban troops fought along with the Syrians in the 1973 war. Evidently the Soviets wish to hone this weapon even sharper for campaigns of tomorrow: in Rhodesia, in the Arabian peninsula, in the Persian Gulf, or wherever. A contingent from Cuba's revolutionary gendarmerie is now in place in Iraq.

This Soviet-Cuban policy operates in the broad context of the rivalry with the West over influence in the third world. It must therefore be politically acceptable to the third world in the guise of ideological support for "liberation" causes, ranging from the Middle East to the Caribbean, and for "economic justice" for the underdeveloped lands. Furthermore, as Castro sought to demonstrate in Havana, the third world must be persuaded that, in his words, the Soviet Union is its "natural ally."

It obviously was an accident that the Havana conference was going on when the Carter administration finally got around to "discovering" what it claims to be some 2500 or 3000 Soviet troops in Cuba. I doubt seriously that the "discovery" was planned to embarrass Castro during his summit; there is too much evidence that the Carter administration had no wish for this knowledge to surface right now because of the trouble it is causing for the now uncertain Senate ratification of the SALT II treaty.

In fact, the disclosure of the Cuban "discovery" has done much more damage to the Carter administration than to Moscow or Havana, particularly because there isn't very much the US can do about it short of triggering a new eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the Russians that the president clearly does not desire. He already has said that this Russian combat "brigade" poses no military danger to the US.

The Carter administration has only itself to blame for the current political fallout of the "discovery," the threat it poses to SALT II ratification, the further erosion of the intelligence community's credibility, and another drop in the plausibility of Carter's leadership.

In the official version supplied to newsmen after the "discovery," the administration itself admitted that it first learned early in 1978 that there might be Soviet combat troops in Cuba, in addition to the thousands of advisers stationed there for nearly 20 years. But it was telling only part of the truth about what it actually knew a year ago. As far back as last December, key intelligence officers were satisfied that for some time the Soviets had been "rotating" combat units in Cuba for purposes of jungle warfare training. This was known to senior officials in the State Department and the White House. But inexplicably, nothing was done about it—either in terms of diplomatic demarches in Moscow or of stepped-up intelligence gathering efforts. The US government remained asleep at the switch until March 1, when National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski asked Central Intelligence Director Stansfield Turner to find out more about the Soviet troops.

The official version states that it was only in mid-June that an analyst at the National Security Agency came up with "evidence" that a Soviet brigade headquarters had been established in Cuba. This "evidence" was said to have set off a fierce controversy within the

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intelligence community. But the truth is that key officials at both the White House and the State Department had been convinced since at least April that the Russians had been using Cuba as training grounds for their combat units.

I reported in these pages early in June that "Washington . . . is nervous about what it suspects is a marked Soviet military buildup in Cuba. . . . There is similar unease about the new Soviet practice of training regular army units, up to battalion strength, in Cuba's Oriente Province. For a combination of international policy reasons, however, the administration has chosen so far not to make a public issue of these new Soviet/Cuban military activities" ("Islands in a Storm," *TNR*, June 16).

Looking back, I think the administration made a grave error during the spring in not revealing this information, even if final corroboration might still have been lacking (as the official version now asserts). It also was wrong not to have raised the issue with the Russians before or during the Carter-Brezhnev SALT summit in Vienna in June. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, the information would leak out—as it did—and the administration would have been in a stronger political position both at home and with the Russians if it had volunteered the knowledge, coming clean with congressional and public opinion. Concern over the signing of SALT II, however, seems to have prevailed at the White House, and silence was maintained.

The result of this policy of silence is that, with SALT II signed, if not ratified, the administration has lost whatever leverage it may have possessed with Brezhnev before the Vienna signing. Moscow may have hoped to have it both ways: to have the strategic treaty signed and, counting on the Carter administration's domestic political fears, to be able to maintain the combat units in Cuba. Now, of course, Moscow must decide whether it is more important to sacrifice SALT ratification in Washington or to suffer the embarrassment of pulling the troops from Cuba under American pressure.

My own guess is that at this late stage, and particularly in the light of its new third world offensive, the Soviet Union may give up SALT II and keep the troops on the Caribbean island. Brezhnev may remember that Khrushchev lost his job after withdrawing Soviet missiles from Cuba in 1962 under President Kennedy's pressure. He also must know that Carter is not prepared to go to the mat with him over the troops in Cuba today. Moscow may prefer to protect its third world policy rather than save SALT. It can always blame the US for not ratifying the treaty.

For the Carter administration, this would be a double loss: it might be deprived of SALT II, to which the president is so committed, while remaining helpless about the continued presence of Soviet troops in Cuba. It is easy to guess the political consequences of such a state of affairs for the Carter candidacy in 1980. And, had the White House used its head, so much of this damage could have been averted.

This brings us to the Havana conference. As far as Castro and the Russians—clearly working in tandem—were concerned, the non-aligned summit was designed at best to harness the movement formally to the Soviet Union or, at worst, to turn it into an orchestrated forum for condemning and denouncing the US and all its works.

Castro's pitch to link the non-aligned states to the Soviets didn't quite succeed, but the Cuban president has three years as chairman of the movement to pursue his objective. In terms of visibility, he certainly has achieved preeminent stature as a third world leader. Yugoslavia's octogenarian Marshal Tito and Tanzania's over-polite President Nyerere were no match for him as he steamrollered the summit to approve most of his anti-American declarations.

The US tried a belated diplomatic blitz in non-aligned capitals to persuade governments not to fall into the Cuban-Soviet trap. But everything militated against it. In the first place, Washington did not understand until the eve of the Havana conference what Castro had up his sleeve. In the second place, US credentials in the third world were too tarnished to encourage even the most friendly members of the non-aligned movement to rise against Castro's offensive.

Though the Carter administration has made much of its human rights and pro-third world rhetoric, its deeds have been more eloquent than its words to the Havana-bound delegations. The Latin Americans remembered how the US fought up to the last moment to prevent a Sandinista take-over in Nicaragua, trying to maneuver into power a pro-American regime to replace the collapsing Somoza dictatorship. Continued US support for the dictatorships in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras likewise did not go unnoticed. The Castro camp had all the ammunition it needed.

In this sense, Havana illustrated the near-collapse of the administration's policies in the third world, ending the self-serving illusion that phrasemaking by such spokesmen as former UN ambassador Andrew Young had somehow turned around the sentiment in the developing nations. Many of the Havana delegates abstained from openly attacking the US, but none rose to defend it. And all went along with Castro's system of "consensus" decision-making to approve resolutions that ranged from the condemnation of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty to denunciations of the US presence in Puerto Rico.

It is a depressing thought that nobody in Havana had the courage to support, ever so mildly, the United States. It is a depressing thought that the Carter administration allowed itself to be victimized by its own handling of the Soviet combat troops episode in Cuba. It is particularly so because things could have happened differently if US foreign policy were in surer hands.

Tad Szulc

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Reflections in 'the worst of times.'

Does It Matter Whether America Matters?

by Henry Fairlie

It will be a tragedy for America and for the rest of the world if the coming election does not raise the national debate to the level of what is at stake. Will America ever fight? As the campaign begins it seems to hold in store only a ragtag and bobtail of candidates and issues. Everyone seems almost as frayed at the beginning as they usually are at the end. This is one reason why the possible entry of Edward Kennedy into the lists makes even his opponents feel some expectancy. At least the election would be about something. Unfortunately it would be about Edward Kennedy. It would be unfortunate because this is one of the crucial elections in which the issue is more important than any candidate. In the course of the next year the American people will decide if they want a future as a great power. The question before them is whether it matters if America matters, and the starkness of this question rightly suggests that there may be something once-and-for-all about it.

This will be the question before the voters even if it is hidden. If they are asked to vote only about a number of relatively trifling concerns—the kind of worries that the opinion polls tell the candidates to talk about if they want to win—the one life-and-death issue will still have been answered by not having been raised in a decisive way. The world will conclude that the American people are still turned inward, and that their politicians are still nervous about the mood of the American people. Persuaded that in these circumstances no reliable response to events can be expected from the United States, enemy and ally alike will begin to make their own arrangements, and will make them in more dangerous ways than if American power was effectively and steadily present. The election that is beginning is no less important than that. One may almost say of it in a line of James Russell Lowell: "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide, / In the strife of Truth and Falsehood, for the good or evil side."

But it is not only the meaning abroad that matters. A people who are as strong, prosperous, and energetic as the Americans will soon grow uneasy if they feel that nowhere, for no one, for nothing, not even for their own interest, will they ever fight. Power is not neutral, even if it is not used. A nation cannot have great power and behave as if it has none without bringing into question not its strength but its character; and just as nations abroad are made anxious, the people at home will be nagged by the question even if they are not aware of the cause. If President Carter is right that there is a national malaise; if these are indeed "the worst of times," as Stuart Eizenstat said in his unhappy memorandum; if Pat Caddell is correct that the American people are uncertain of their children's future; if others have suddenly raised a cry for leadership in the land: then they might all start looking for the explanation by asking whether America wishes to behave like a great power.

The occasion is so important that we ought to begin by trying to understand what happens in elections. Our view of what goes on in an election will, after all, affect the way in which politicians try to win one. If we think that an election is only a race—the unfortunate word that Americans use—then it will be conducted as if it is only a race. Today this is all the more unfortunate because everything about an election, from the opinion polls and the primaries to the way in which the press and television report it, tends to emphasize the characteristics that are most like those of a race. The difference between a primary and an Olympic heat may often be obscured next year. Of course the dynamism of an election lies in the competition of candidates and parties to come in first. But this does not mean that in the process a different and deeper function is not performed.

The growth of mass electorates and mass communications is very recent. One result is that no ancient political philosopher, not even any deep 19th-century brooder on the nature of democracy, is much help in explaining the function or meaning of elections. There is hardly more assistance to be had from most political scientists. They seem to think that one can understand what happens in elections by adding up columns of figures, then dividing them into categories of sex and age and class and occupation, then transposing them into graphs and charts that only mathematicians can understand. But the real fault of their method is that they treat election results as if they are the same as census returns: no more than registers of a few static characteristics of the electorate as revealed in the act of voting. Even if their use of their raw material was trustworthy, political scientists still would be describing only what happens *at* elections on polling day, and not what happens *in* them during the whole course of a campaign.

It is obvious that the people vote partly for utilitarian reasons, consulting their own interests. But it is wrong

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to explain how they vote only on utilitarian principles. We would not be so interested in elections if all they told us was whether the voters think that their jobs are safe and are satisfied with the amounts of their take-home pay. We are right when we talk as if there is a "public mood" which the politicians try to sniff at elections, and which determines the results at least as much as any calculations of self-interest. What is this mood? One way of trying to understand it is to take seriously the rhetoric in which politicians call at elections for a rededication of the nation, because the most important as well as the most obvious characteristic of an election is that it is not about the past or the present but about the future. We do not examine the results of an election only to find out who has won; we study them also to get some feel of where the nation thinks it is going and is ready to go. Elections are ultimately attempts to define a nation's future. They are even attempts to redefine the nation.

The task of reading a nation's future used to be performed in older and less complicated societies by the augurs. The method was, on the whole, expedient and quick. Caesar had only to say that the augurs had examined the diseased liver of a goose, and his legions at once plunged into the Rubicon sure that victory lay ahead. The methods of democracy have to be more patient. In place of goose livers we have election results. It is ultimately only in them that we can find where it is possible for the nation to go. If the future is "read" incorrectly at an election, nothing in the next four years will go right. To put this in the most immediate terms: if it is possible to get elected by offering the wrong kind of leadership, it will be impossible to provide the right kind of leadership in office. Because of the present working of the electoral system in America, it was possible for Carter to be elected in 1976 without forcing any redefinition of the nation—the "nation" that elected him was no more than a patchwork, not even a coalition of regions or interests—and the inevitable result is that there has been no nation on which his leadership in office has been able to draw. No purpose was defined in 1976 to which it now feels committed with him. That is why one is awestruck by how little depth there is to his support in the country—no equivalent of those who would stick with Johnson or Nixon through thick and thin—and why he is reduced to campaigning from a paddle steamer and landing stages. There is no country for him to walk on.

I do not think that this means that we can therefore count Carter out of the race. There are many political resources both within and outside himself to which he can and yet may reach in time. If Edward Kennedy at last enters the race, Carter obviously will be threatened but he also will be strengthened. Every Democrat who detests or fears Kennedy will turn to the incumbent president as the only Democratic candidate who has a chance of defeating him. Once there is an enemy, there will also be allies. But the nation he would put together to win would again be only a patchwork.

Unless. . . . To appreciate the unless, it is worth looking back. The most remarkable feature of the 1976 election was that it was the first since America assumed the responsibilities of a world power in which foreign policy was not a prominent issue. It was as if, with the American withdrawal from Vietnam, the rest of the world was to be blotted from the mind. No one in authority in America since the end of the war has tried to excite the national debate on foreign policy that is needed and that one would have expected to occur. Neither of the two secretaries of state in that time has given the slightest evidence that he regards it as part of his duties to provoke such a debate in the kind of political terms that enable the people to participate. Henry Kissinger does not talk to the people; this has never been a habit in Central Europe. He talks to other foreign policy experts. Cyrus Vance is about as communicative on foreign policy as a Trappist monk. This was not the way of Dean Acheson or, for that matter, of John Foster Dulles, and their way was much healthier.

Acheson and Dulles were always in the public arena, expounding and defending their policies, and so stirring up public debate about them. One might disagree with their policies, but everyone knew what they were. No one was in doubt as to where they thought that the national interest lay, or was left wondering what measures they thought were necessary to protect it. From neither of the past two administrations has it been possible for the people to know these things. If there is no conception of the national interest in the popular mind, or of what is being done to defend it, it is not surprising that the nation is reduced to nothing but a patchwork. It is not surprising that there are only scattered groups of local and particular interests to which the candidates for Congress as well as for the presidency must truckle. If Carter understood that the question of American power is what is really nagging at the American people, he would occupy the main ground of this election, which is still vacant and in which the president's authority can be overwhelming.

It is often said that the voters are not much interested in foreign affairs, but it is much closer to the truth to say that they are always voting about foreign affairs.

Coming:

Stephen Chapman on the Failure of Election Campaign Reform.

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This does not mean that they understand—or think that they understand, or even need to understand—every detail of any problem of foreign policy. But they do know that there is such a thing as the national interest; they have their own sense of it; and they rightly identify their own interests and even their lives with it. If they are unclear as to what the national interest is, they feel less secure about their personal interests. If they feel that the national interest is not being protected, they themselves feel threatened in their own day-to-day rounds. The feeling that one's country is being kicked around, as we should know from the histories of many countries, gives rise to the uneasy feeling that it is oneself who is being kicked. This affects how people react to every other problem and vote on every other issue. It is hard to persuade them that the national interest is at stake in an energy shortage at home if they are not convinced that there is any national interest that needs to be protected vigilantly abroad. Everyone might just as well look after himself or herself, and feed morsels of organic wheat germ to the snaildarter.

We do not have to reach to any notion of patriotism to explain this—although a legitimate patriotism is not to be discounted—and it is grossly unfair to suggest that such a concern has anything to do with warmongering. There is ample evidence that the voters can add up Angola and Panama and Zimbabwe and Cuba, and yet not arrive at the same sum as Ronald Reagan. The people have more capacious minds than Reagan, with room for more than one response to different stimuli. They are able to perceive different degrees of danger, and react to them at different levels of intensity. They do not find it necessary to add every complicated and unsuccessful encounter of America with the world to a simple roll call of American defeat. They are even capable of entertaining the notion that not every unsuccess is to be counted as a defeat. Nevertheless, in such circumstances there is always a raw nerve to be touched. It is when legitimate leaders do not clearly define the national interest, and do not seem willing or able to protect it, that illegitimate leaders have their chance to come forth. When the urbane are feeble, the primitive will seem strong.

Seldom has it been more important that an election should accomplish the kind of redefinition that I have described. This cannot be done simply by calling for leadership, and looking around to find someone to whom the label of leader can be fixed. More is needed than to draft a waterlogged hulk to do service as a flagship. There are several imbalances in the American political system at the moment that make it very difficult for an appropriate or fertile communication to take place between the people and their politicians. To uncover and correct those imbalances ought to be part of the work of the coming year, for the kind of communication that takes place between the voters and the candidates will count more than the final results, as together they interact in order to discover for America and the world a sense of the nation again.

The ayatollah writes the latest chapter in the sad history of the Kurds.

Khomeini's 'Feast of Blood'

by Smith Hempstone

Shedders of blood, raisers after strife, seekers after turmoil and uproar, robbers and brigands; a people all malignant, and evil-doers of depraved habits, ignorant of all mercy, devoid of all humanity, scorning the garment of wisdom; but a brave race and fearless, of a hospitality grateful to the soul, in truth and in honor unequalled, of pleasing countenance and fair cheek, boasting all the goods of beauty and grace.

Thus a 19th-century Western traveler described the Kurds, the warrior-poets now locked in combat with the Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic regime in Iran. Since the days of Alexander the Great, the Kurds always have gotten the short end of the stick from history.

The Kurds, a Sunni Moslem but non-Arab people—they are thought by some to be the descendants of the ancient Medes—have lived in their Central Asian mountain fastness since the beginnings of recorded time. They have fought with ravenous joy for their independence against Greeks, Persians, Mongols, Turks, Arabs, crusaders, and Britons. When there has been no outsider to wage war against, they have kept in practice by fighting one another. The Kurds number more than 10 million but, despite their centuries of struggle, no atlas portrays a nation called Kurdistan.

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In the aftermath of World War I, when Wilsonian self-determination was all the rage, the 1920 Treaty of Sevres promised the Kurds a homeland of their own. But the rise of Kemal Atatürk and the greed of Britain and France aborted the treaty. The Kürds were left worse off than they were before: formerly united in bondage under the Ottoman Turks, the Kurds found their homeland divided among three masters: Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. Today, six million Kurds live in Turkey, four million in Iran, and two million in Iraq. Another 600,000 are divided between Syria and the Soviet Union.

In 1919, Atatürk, who dealt just as harshly with Turkey's Greek and Armenian minorities, swore "to proceed in such a manner as to destroy the possibility of a separatist movement by the Kurds." His successors proceeded in the same manner. It is Turkish policy to this day to deny even the existence of a people called the Kurds: they are, according to Ankara, simply mountain Turks who have forgotten their language and miraculously learned another.

Kurdish rebellions in 1925, 1930, and 1937 were put down with great severity. The leaders were executed and some tribes were exiled from their mountain homes. Today the Kurdish areas of eastern Turkey are under martial law. The use of Kurdish as a written language is forbidden, and it may not be spoken on Turkish radio or television. To be elected to the national assembly, one must demonstrate a fluency in Turkish that most Kurds do not possess.

There are at least 16 underground Kurdish organizations in Turkey, but the only political party openly to espouse the Kurdish cause, the Marxist Turkish Labor party, was banned in 1971 and its leaders were given long prison sentences. Because of Ankara's tough policies, internal tribal rivalries, and linguistic differences, there has been no significant Kurdish insurrection in Turkey for more than four decades. The few Kurds within Syria and the Soviet Union also have been quiet.

The situation has been quite different in Iraq. There the Kurdish nationalist movement has been dominated since 1927 by the Barzani clan, whose charismatic leader, Mulla Mustafa Barzani, died in exile in Washington earlier this year. (Mulla Mustafa's father was hanged by the Turks.) Iraq, whether ruled by monarchists or leftists such as the current Moscow-supported Baathist regime, has from time to time granted its two million Kurds some cultural and political autonomy. But it has never been enough for the freedom-loving Kurds. Four times between 1961 and 1974, Mulla Mustafa Barzani launched full-scale rebellions against Baghdad.

The 1974 insurrection came closest to succeeding. Barzani's Pesh Merga ("those who face death")—supported by the shah of Iran, armed by the Central Intelligence Agency, and assisted by the Israelis—gained control over 43,000 square miles of north-eastern Iraq.

But the shah never wanted the rebellion to succeed, for fear of the example it might provide to Iran's four million Kurds. Barzani, totally dependent on the shah for food and military equipment, was kept on a short leash. The shah was just using him and his movement to weaken the Iraq Baathist regime, which was fomenting disorders among Iran's Baluchi tribesmen and giving refuge to anti-shah dissidents.

When that purpose had been served, and Baghdad proved willing to make other political concessions to Iran, the shah (and Henry Kissinger) pulled the oriental carpet out from under Barzani. The revolt collapsed in 1975, and many of Barzani's followers fled into Iran, where they were disarmed and interned. Many of those who stayed behind in Iraq were executed or deported to punishment camps in the south, leaving whole areas of Iraqi Kurdistan depopulated.

Kurdish rebellions in northwestern Iran in 1921, 1926, and 1930 were put down by Reza Shah, father of the exiled monarch and founder of the short-lived Pahlevi dynasty. There were executions, but the Iranian monarchy's Kurdish policies fell somewhere between Turkey's total denial of the very existence of the Kurds and the more permissive line of at least some Iraqi regimes.

In Iran, where Kurds account for about 10 percent of a population that is no more than 60 percent Persian, the tribes were disarmed, the use of Kurdish was not permitted in schools or government, and Kurds who showed marked leadership qualities or dissident tendencies were either bought off or restricted in their activities. But books in Kurdish were published, and Kurdish programs were broadcast by the state-controlled radio.

Yet the Pahlevi monarchy never succeeded by this judicious use of the carrot and the stick in totally extinguishing the spark of Kurdish nationalism. In 1946 the Kurds, with Russian help, set up an independent Marxist republic at Mahabad. But when Harry Truman forced the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from northern Iran, the central government retook Mahabad, executed the republic's president,

Coming:

Morton Kondracke on

Why Germany Works.

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Qazi Mohammad, and forced Barzani, who had crossed the Iraqi border with several thousand fighting men to help the Iranian Kurds, into a Russian exile that lasted a dozen years.

With the collapse of the Pahlevi dynasty in February of this year, many of Iran's Kurds hoped they would be allowed autonomy within the framework of the Ayatollah Kohmeini's Islamic republic. But as a precaution—for there is a saying that "the Kurds have no friends"—they took over most of the police posts and army barracks within Iranian Kurdistan, helping themselves to the arms stored there.

It is difficult to say who started the fighting in Iranian Kurdistan; what the objectives of the Kurdish leaders are; and what outside forces, if any, are supporting the insurrection. Khomeini may have called for a Shi'ite holy war against the Sunni Kurds to divert the attention of his restive countrymen from the inadequacies of his regime. Certainly he used the disorders in Kurdistan as a pretext to crush all opposition to his rule.

The first confrontation between Khomeini and the Kurds came late last February after the Kurds took over the Mahabad garrison, wounding its commander. Dispatched to Mahabad to find out what was going on, Labor Minister Dariush Forouhar was told by Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini, the bearded, 58-year-old Kurdish religious leader, that the Kurds "are not separatists."

What Hosseini and Abdul Rahman Qassemlu, secretary general of the banned Kurdish Democratic party, said they wanted from the new regime was local autonomy within the framework of a federal, democratic Iran; joint control of military and police forces within Kurdistan; and, paradoxically, a crackdown on the political and military activities of Barzani's two exiled sons, Idris and Massoud. There was no formal reply to the Kurdish demands from either Khomeini or the government of Mehdi Barzagan.

Throughout the spring, Kurdish missions continued to travel between Mahabad and Tehran. More police posts and army barracks were peacefully occupied in Kurdistan, their demoralized garrisons disarmed and told to leave the area.

Late in July, Major General Nasser Farbod resigned as Iranian army chief of staff, and was replaced by Brigadier General Hossein Shaker, a hardliner. On July 22, the first major armed clash occurred when Iranian army units relieved a police post besieged by the Kurds near the Turkish frontier. Another bloody incident took place on July 28, when revolutionary militiamen called Pasdars tried to re-enter the Kurdish town of Marivan.

The fighting escalated in August when the army and the hated Pasadars retook the town of Paveh after a bombardment by tanks, artillery, helicopter gunships, and American-made F-4 jets. More than 400 people lost their lives in the Paveh fighting. The Kurds claimed to have downed three helicopters and an F-4.

Khomeini, enraged at the Kurdish resistance—and fearful their separatist virus might prove contagious for Iran's Arab, Baluchi, and Turkomen minorities (Pasdar brutality in Khuzistan already had provoked serious rioting among Iran's Arabs)—assumed personal command of the armed forces. He threatened military leaders who did not achieve immediate results in Kurdistan with "revolutionary justice" (a euphemism for execution) and called for "a feast of blood" in Kurdistan. The Kurdish Democratic party was banned, Hosseini and Qassemlu were branded as "corrupt Satanic agents," and the summary execution of captured Kurdish guerrillas began in Saqqez and other government-held Kurdish towns.

A Kurdish peace mission to Tehran failed. Khomeini was quoted as saying the Kurds "deserved no mercy." The Kurdish leaders abandoned Mahabad without a major battle and pulled their forces back deep into the mountains. Qassemlu accused Khomeini of planning "a genocide of the Kurds," while he and Hosseini continued to insist they are not separatists, but want only the right to run their own affairs within the framework of Iran's independence, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty.

At last report the situation seems to have reached a stalemate, with Khomeini's forces in control of most Kurdish towns, but the Kurdish guerrilla units still roaming the mountains with their captured weapons.

It is clear the Kurds cannot hope to succeed, if success is defined as the creation of an autonomous Kurdistan independent of Tehran in all but name. History has demonstrated that a Kurdish nationalist movement can succeed only with the coincidence of three key factors: the emergence of a single, charismatic Kurdish leader, the existence of a weak central government, and the active support of an adjacent major power.

The division of authority (and support) betwen Hosseini and Qassemlu, the two Iranian Kurdish leaders, is not clear, and neither is a charismatic figure like Mulla Mustafa Barzani. Massoud Barzani is gallant, but he is both an Iraqi and a tribal chief, and hence suspect to the radical faction of the KDP. The regime in Tehran is weak but, spurred both by fear of their own executions and by anti-Sunni prejudices, Iranian army commanders, with their far superior fire power, have shown themselves capable of holding the Kurdish towns and roads.

Qassemlu claims (and Khomeini charges) he has Moscow's support, but there is no firm evidence of this. The Kremlin has no love for Khomeini, who has cracked down on Iran's Communists and incited Afghan rebels against Moscow's client regime in Kabul. But the Russians, while they have influenced the Kurdish nationalist movement over the years, never have been prepared to give wholehearted support to it.

Certainly the United States, which participated in the shah's betrayal of the pro-Western Barzanis, has shown no disposition to embrace Qassemlu, who spent

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years in exile in Czechoslovakia and has ties to many European Marxist groups. Nor is there any evidence of Israeli participation in this chapter of the Kurdish saga, although Jerusalem has an ax to grind with Khomeini, who cut off the principal source of Israel's oil and backs the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In the absence of fruitful negotiations between the Kurds and Khomeini—and the chances of this now seem slight—the prospect is for a prolonged guerrilla war in Kurdistan, which will bring great suffering to Iran's four million Kurds.

Mulla Mustafa Barzani, in the last bitter days of his Washington exile, once remarked that "the Kurds are the orphans of the universe." With President Carter, who has spoken more than once of the need to inject an element of morality into the conduct of foreign policy, selling kerosene and military supplies to Khomeini's regime, that would appear to be an accurate appraisal.

Arthritis and "non-alignment."

The Third World in Middle Age

by Thomas Geoghegan

At the recent sixth meeting of the non-aligned heads of state in Havana, the rhetoric of "non-alignment" had one last hurrah. The delegates at the conference listened politely to sermons from old-time third-worlders from the 1950s such as Fidel Castro and Marshal Tito, on the subject of which side the non-aligned nations should align with. Though the Western press took the whole conference quite seriously, there was something quaint and even comic about the raising once more of this antique theological question. The current generation of third world leaders, including most of the delegates to the Havana conference, have lost the taste for "non-aligned" theology in a world that hangs on the words of Sheik Yamani.

In contrast to its solemn treatment of the Havana conference, the Western press has been describing with more appropriate amusement the recent scrambles for power and cynical alliances among India's political leaders after the downfall of the Desai government in July. The first successor to Desai, 77-year-old Charan Singh, was perhaps the most grasping and cynical of the lot. Although he was the most determined prosecutor of Indira Gandhi in the last cabinet, he came to power by trying to cut a deal for the ex-dictator's support. Then he resigned in a high-minded huff, accusing Gandhi of trying to "blackmail" him.

The political atmosphere has been so sordid that many expect Indira Gandhi's faction of the Congress party to emerge with the largest vote in November's elections. Try to imagine how desperate the US political situation would have to be if Richard Nixon suddenly emerged as a promising contender. Yet no matter how sordid, India's politicians solemnly invoke the pious shades of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru on almost every occasion. At the outset of his 24-day rule, Singh announced his devotion to "the policy of non-alignment which will not lean on any superpower."

These two shorts bursts of the old rhetoric of the 1950s make one wonder what ever became of the great obsession with "non-alignment." In the black-and-white world of John Foster Dulles, non-alignment commanded breathless attention. For the leaders of the new states in Asia and Africa, it was their moral platform, and their moment of glory in history. Nehru and others pictured themselves as existential heroes, forced to make an anguished choice between the horrors of Coca-Cola capitalism and Stalinism. "Development," it seemed, dictated the choice of one or another of these "models." Fresh from their Oxford educations or Paris student life, a whole generation of Prince Hamlets came to power agonizing over which price they should pay to lift their countries into the modern world.

Twenty years later, it turns out that most of this posturing was wasted energy. Neither "model" works; the gap between rich and poor nations simply widens. Democracy doesn't work. Authoritarianism doesn't work. When Chile tried to combine communism and parliamentary democracy, that didn't work either, and only alarmed the military, the middle class, and our own Harold Geneen. In fact, instead of capitalism or communism, every third world country that can do so has opted in various degrees for the economic mercantilist doctrines of the French Bourbon kings. OPEC's star has replaced Nehru's.

The romance of non-alignment also was a casualty of detente. No doubt someone on the National Security

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Council worries about India's continued "non-alignment." So does Pat Moynihan, perhaps. But in the world made by Henry Kissinger, that anti-Christ of Dulles diplomacy, the moral issue of non-alignment is strictly horse and buggy. The US may care about Soviet "proxies," "arcs of crisis," and various matters that can be given the prefix "geo-." But the new mandarins of US foreign policy do not care about winning hearts and minds in India, or even among our Chinese friends.

In Africa, Cuba has become its own worst enemy. The moderate countries like Nigeria have turned against it. The Soviets have been expelled from at least as many third world countries as they've wormed their way into during the last 10 years. These expulsions have not been unmixed blessings for our side. The US can scarcely afford the expense of having both Egypt and Israel as its friends. More conversions like Sadat's could finish the dollar off for good.

Above all, the old third world rhetoric, the claim to a special moral purity, has fallen victim to a massive debunking of moral poses of every kind. Only in Africa, with its evangelical moral issues, does moral posturing survive at all. The once-burning question of a morally pure "third way" between East and West, however, now seems like so much hot air from the age of Sputnik.

Even in India. India may or may not deserve a government as good as the people of India. But few can have illusions about Indira Gandhi, Charan Singh, or their parliamentary cronies. The guided democracy of Indira's father, along with its high moral tone, collapsed into caudillo-style government under the daughter. The Gandhi dictatorship, set up for the sake of national unity, had to be overthrown for the sake of national unity. Now it may have to be brought back again. The leaders call for spiritual renewal, then proceed to double-cross each other with abandon.

Non-alignment, even in Nehru's day, had its cynical side; it never meant pacifistic neutrality. China, Pakistan, and little Portuguese Goa were fair targets. But Nehru was an intellectual, like many other third world leaders of the time—someone especially prone to moral visions and perhaps moral pretensions. In some cases, including Nehru's, these moral visions may have been intended more to build support for the "great man," rather than to receive consideration in their own right. But the invention of the "third world" helped confirm the people in these newly independent countries of their own moral superiority and righteousness. That sense was crucial to the loyalty the new leaders were trying to create. A unique generation of politicians—the Nehrus, the Ho Chi Minhs, the Nkhrumahs, the Nassers, the Nyereres—had the skills to provide it.

Since then, the third world has come of middle age. The conferences in Bandung in 1955, led by Nehru and Sukarno, and in Belgrade in 1961, led by Tito and Nasser, were the high-water mark of third world unity under the first generation leadership. A new class of bureaucrats, politicians, and military officers has emerged in the past two decades. These new leaders, with the help of time itself, have swept the philosopher-statesmen from power. It is the age of Charan Singh and Indira Gandhi. Perhaps the people of the third world could not continue to believe indefinitely in their own moral superiority. Perhaps, like those of us in "advanced countries," they have become grateful when the government simply picks up the garbage. Perhaps they think a "third way" between East and West is baloney.

Even in China. Since 1949, with endless self-congratulations, the Peoples Republic engaged in a collective "30-year plan" to construct a "new man" who would drag the third world into the 20th century. In this time, Maoism has seemed to infatuate friend and foe in equal measure, not only in the third world but also in the West. To the American right wing, China was the country of 900 million Manchurian candidates. And for the left, here and abroad, Maoist China became a totem of pop culture; after all, it stood for government by means of "cultural revolution." Jean-Luc Godard, the Rolling Stones, and Madison Avenue can relate to that. By the late 1960s, only the Beatles were left to warn against "carrying pictures of Chairman Mao."

In his book *Politics and Markets*, Charles Lindbloom explains why even political scientists found China's "third way" so entrancing. Here was an attempt, however partial, to organize society's business without markets and without bureaucratic commands. "Education" in the thought of Mao would fill this gap, and stimulate the heroic production efforts that would not be forthcoming from markets or Soviet-style bureaucracies.

Of course, elites in other countries would be very curious to know how to unleash heroic production efforts. In the US, post-industrial pundits like Christopher Lasch and Daniel Bell decry the decline of the work ethic. In his down-from-Camp-David speech, President Carter urged Americans to reject "a mistaken idea of freedom: the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others." He urged instead "another path: the path of common purpose." He declared that this second "path" was in accord with "all the traditions of our past" and would lead to "the restoration of American values." But surely it is the "mistaken," competitive view that is most traditionally American. Carter's "other path," and even the lilt of his rhetoric in describing it, is straight from Chairman Mao. With tireless work, and inspired by the thoughts of their leaders, American workers will transcend the limits on output imposed by the material factors of production. If Carter continues to brood over books like Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*, this may well be the basis of our anti-inflation program.

But while our president embraces the Maoist "new man," Mao's mystique has begun to fray at the edges back in China. Mao was hardly cold in his grave when

(continued on page 39, following advertising supplement)

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A report from The Edison Electric Institute

SYMPOSIUM

A Special 16-Page Overview

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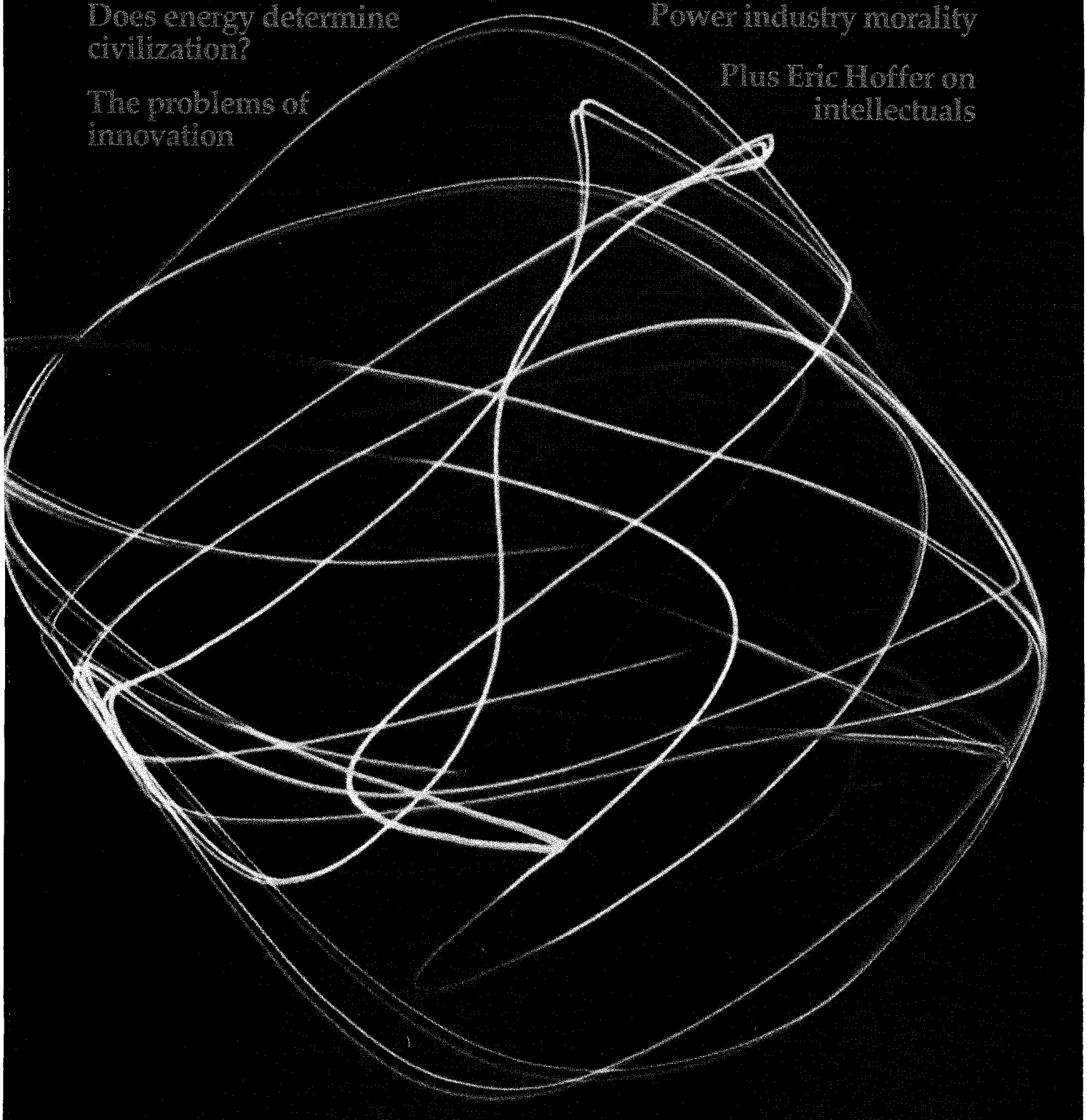
Plus Eric Hoffer on intellectuals

The problems of innovation



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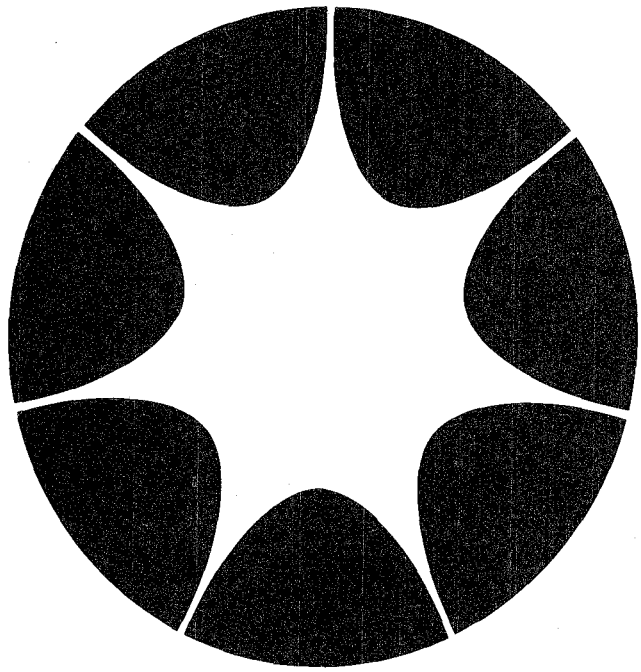
THE GROWTH OF LIMITS

by Chauncey Starr



NOTE: As one of the official events of the Edison Centennial commemorating the 100th anniversary of the electric light bulb, the Electric Power Research Institute and the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation were cohosts of an international Symposium on Science, Technology and the Human Prospect, held in San Francisco in April, 1979.

Some 45 distinguished, international scholars, scientists, governmental officials and businessmen delivered papers during the three-day Symposium. The Edison Electric Institute is making a cross-section of the views expressed by the participants available in this form because it is dedicated to offering concerned citizens impartial information on the various issues affecting the nation's electricity needs, usage and delivery systems.

The articles in this insert, severely edited to meet space limitations with the authors' kind permission, can only begin to suggest the diversity of subject matter and range of opinion presented at the Symposium. Readers interested in obtaining the complete text of the Symposium proceedings should contact Pergamon Press, Fairview Park, Elmsford, N.Y. 10523. In addition, a 45-minute videotaped documentary of the Symposium has been produced. For information on its availability, contact the Electric Power Research Institute, 3412 Hillview Avenue, Post Office Box 10412, Palo Alto, Calif. 94303.

Symposium is edited by Rees Behrendt and designed by George Kurten.

Edison Electric Institute
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We now live within a framework shaped by complex technology, and we can't help but be concerned about how that technology will affect our future.

I believe history supports this assertion: science and technology have continually relieved the limitations on man's ability to live in the circumstances provided by nature, and they continue to do so.

Science and technology have permitted enormous growth in the world population by improving man's ability to increase food production; to accommodate to harsh climates; to provide transportation and communication for the world's goods, services and ideas; to increase available resources and use them more effectively; and to live longer in better health.

Thus, science and technology historically have opened new frontiers for mankind, not only permitting but also stimulating the "growth of limits." I do not accept the premise that constraints on such growth are in view or that our long-range planning should be determined by today's perceptions of existing limits. I believe that a long future of expanding expectations continues to be an available option if we take advantage of the fact that technology is an unlimited resource of the human mind.

The real question we face is: do we want to accept the idea of limits as a guide to human expectations and societal planning, or do we want to keep alive the idea of expanding expectations and new horizons? If we choose expansion, we need more science and technology applied to a spectrum of uses and to the problems of dealing with the undesirable side effects of growth.

The recently popular "limits to growth" theme was based on the assumption that natural resources and ecology impose a near-term limit on our ability to continue to derive materials from the earth and to handle safely residuals of growing industrial processes. For proponents of this theme, the obvious course would be to limit the personal economic expectations of those now alive and to limit sharply the growth in the world's population. This is a seductive dogma, because if it were socially and politically feasible to accept such limitations, and thus reduce the worldwide demand for goods and services, we would simultaneously reduce the stress on our natural environment, on our political and social institutions and on our problem-solving and decision-making mechanisms. But is such a prescription acceptable from a social and political standpoint? Perhaps it is for the comparatively wealthy, but what about the poor people of the world? For them, limits to growth would mean lives of hopelessness.

The continuing debate on energy supply and demand epitomizes these issues. Those who press the view that man-made energy processes alter the natural ecology appear to forget that human society also has a complex energy ecology woven into its fabric. As with natural

Dr. Starr is Vice Chairman of the Electric Power Research Institute. This article is from his keynote address to the Symposium.

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ecology, any change in this total system of relationships will affect all its components. Popular ignorance of this fact has led to many simplistic notions regarding the role of energy in the quality of life, ranging from the idyllic notion that the less energy used, the better the life, to the opposite extreme, the need for unlimited abundance. Neither extreme has sufficient evidence to support its validity.

When we examine social groups with very low energy supplements, we find they are frequently on starvation's edge, ridden with malnutrition, endemic disease and physical misery. It has been estimated that one-fourth of the world now lives on this edge of survival. Given a free choice, such groups avidly seek more energy. The vehicle for energy to improve the quality of life is technology. And this is intuitively understood by the world's peoples.

Thus, if personal aspirations worldwide cannot be reduced, limiting economic growth would create major—and perhaps catastrophic—strains on our international political and social institutions.

I challenge the factual validity of the assumption that resources are limited, which is at the root of the doctrine of limited expectations. I believe that the resources available for use into the distant future are not generally limited, because history testifies that advances in technology expand the availability of resources. Technology does this by providing increased efficiency in the conversion of resources to human uses, i.e., less is needed to produce more, and in the extraction of traditional resources from the biosphere, as well as by providing methods for the conversion of dormant substances into new resources. So far, we have extracted only a small fraction of the store in the earth's crust. History also tells us that the apparently limited resources available to mankind in any one period of time become just a small fraction of the resources ultimately available to later generations because of the intervening contribution of science and technology.

As an example, let us consider the availability of oil. If oil exploration and extraction had been restricted to the techniques that were current about 1900, we would have been out of oil generations ago. At the beginning of this century, available U.S. reserves were about one billion barrels—enough for a decade then and for about two months of our present use. What oil was available then was found by looking for signs of seepage at the surface and by drilling around salt springs. In that period, we didn't have the sophisticated exploration, deep drilling and extraction techniques available today. Technology has enabled us to discover oil repositories miles underground and to force that oil out, as well as to obtain it through artesian pressures. And we've been able to open up oil fields under the oceans. There is no possible way that anyone without high-technology engineering equipment could develop a deep sea oil well. This is truly a frontier opened by technology.

This is a good example of how technology has kept increasing the available supply of all mineral resources and illustrates how science and technology are instrumental in expanding the limits of man's resources.

This expansion of limits has occurred with minerals, with food, with transportation, with communication, with health and with extending livable space in unfriendly, harsh environments.

There is ample stimulation to reassess the role of science and technology in our social development, to explore what they have done for the world's nations, what they mean to the individual and where they are likely to go in the future. Such an assessment is particularly timely for the electric industry. The major economic growth of the industrial nations has taken place parallel with and supported by the development of new uses for electricity, so the electric industry recognizes its responsibility as a partner in this growth.

Those of us pursuing the applications of science and technology believe that all progress in these fields is good for humanity generally and the developing nations in particular. Yet we do recognize the serious negative impact that some of the byproducts of these technical developments have had on individuals, on specific social trends and on the environment in which we live. We are also conscious of the possibility that such social costs might become so large that we must carefully examine what we are doing and perhaps better plan our activities.

There has been—during this past decade, in particular—a growing attack by a portion of the intellectual community on the social merit of the industrial section of our society. The electric utility industry is one such target, as are the automobile industry and the chemical industry.

A segment of the intellectual community has suggested that we should somehow restructure our society to remove the heavy hand of technology. This has been one of the popular tenets of the environmental movement. The basic question being posed is: are we the passive subjects of an uncontrollable technical system, or are we able to control this system to improve our destiny? I believe we must understand all aspects of such fundamental questions and assist our society in finding its balance.

Whether or not one pushes technological growth depends partly on individual philosophic beliefs and partly on the perceived prospects for technology. For more than a hundred years, most societies had unquestioned faith that technological growth was worthwhile. Our cultural conceptions of the role of science and technology are very fundamental to the average man. They affect his immediate activities, his future and that of his children and grandchildren. In the last few decades, our faith in technology has been questioned. And these doubts have created public issues bearing not only on the applications of science and technology but also on the creation of new knowledge. To some, the disapproval of the intended end of a particular science or technology means that research to develop fundamental knowledge should be stopped. But to do so would inhibit the potential for its good use, as well as for its bad. The debate on genetic engineering is such a case. In contrast, as an example of the stimulation fostered by an approved objective, the continual search for military superiority has historically extended scientific and engineering frontiers. It is an interesting commentary on the priorities of nations that this search for military strength has focused resources on new technology as no other social goal has done. It is indeed regrettable that our peaceful objectives are not equally stimulating.

It is my own belief that science and technology are powerful and unlimited resources for bettering man's condition; that the undesirable byproducts of their applications are susceptible to reduction by these same arts; that science and technology are the key to the "growth of limits" for resources and to the application of these resources for useful purposes, as well as to the breaking of constraints on human expectations and aspirations; and that future generations will be able to manage competently the world they will inherit—one that I believe will be better than the world my generation inherited. I believe this can, and will, happen, provided our sociological and cultural structures do not inhibit the intrinsically fruitful activities of science and technology—whether from fear of future uncertainties or from paranoid anxieties created by the doomsday syndrome.

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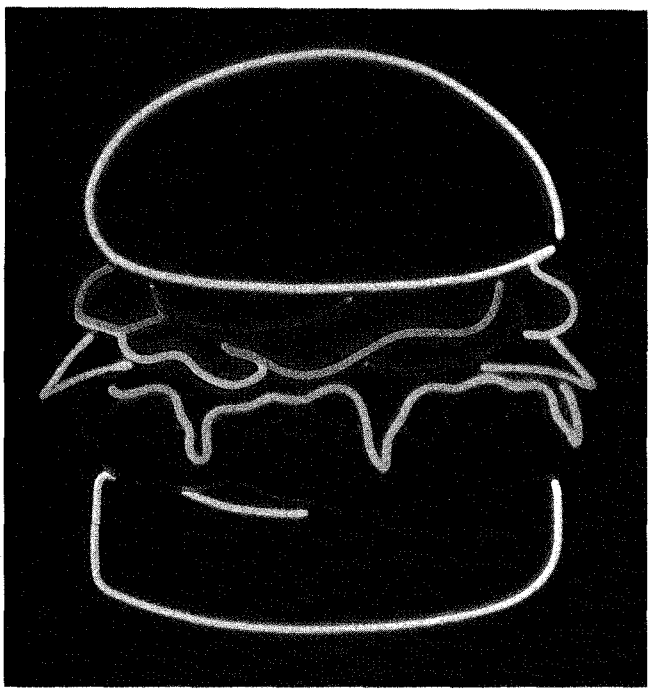
THE FALLACY OF THE ENERGY-CIVILIZATION EQUATION

by George Basalla



Among the critics of energy conservation are those who claim that as we use less energy we will become less civilized. They believe that the retreat from high energy consumption will lead mankind directly back to the caves that provided his first shelter. The immediate response to this warning is that the first substantial use of petroleum dates not to the Stone Age but to the period of the Civil War. And furthermore, that even a fifty percent reduction in our total consumption of energy would not transport us back to Paleolithic times, nor even to the Dark Ages, but to the 1950s.

Nevertheless, apocalyptic visions of an American society forced to reduce its energy consumption continue to haunt us. We foresee a doomed civilization, with tractors paralyzed in the fields, abandoned automobiles rusting on weed-choked freeways, factories as quiet as tombs and our haggard descendants facing a life of everlasting drudgery. These are strange visions for a nation that uses a 5,000-pound automobile to drive a mile in order to buy a half-dozen cans of beer that will be drunk in an overcooled room and the empties thrown on the trash heap instead of being delivered to an aluminum recycling center.

How did it come about that a people who use and waste vast amounts of energy believe that the alternative to high energy consumption is the primitive life endured by early man? And, even if the choice is not between the Stone Age and life in the twentieth century, what is the relationship between energy use and level of civilization?

The current approach to the energy problem ignores the fact that for almost two centuries energy consumption in the West has had an ideological component. High energy consumption has not only been associated with physical comfort, economic well-being and military strength, it has also been identified with the idea of civilization itself.

The tendency of the Western nations to equate energy use with level of civilization was accurately and satirically described by British author Aldous Huxley. Said Huxley, because we use a hundred and ten times as much coal as our ancestors, we naively think that we are a hundred and ten times better intellectually, morally and spiritually.

When energy consumption thus serves as a measure of the height of civilization reached by a nation, then changes in energy use will have wide implications. As less energy is available per capita, the nation is thought to lose its standing among the world's civilizations.

Those countries with high rates of energy consumption are ideologically committed to maintaining them, and those with lower rates are motivated to copy their energy-hungry, civilized superiors. This ideological commitment helps to explain why so many of the less industrialized nations felt it necessary to have their own nuclear reactors. It was not necessity that drove them to acquire them but the feeling that they might be left behind in this latest event in the energy-civilization race.

To simplify consideration of these matters, I will assume the existence of an energy-civilization equation. Although no one has ever formally written out such an equation, it has pervaded western thought for the past two centuries. It can be found in the physical, life and social sciences, and in technology, philosophy and popular culture.

The left side of that equation contains energy, a well-defined physical concept. On the opposite side appears civilization, which is a subjective evaluation of the intellectual, moral and aesthetic accomplishments of a society. The two sides of the equation are directly related, so that high energy consumption results in high civilization and low energy consumption in a low level of civilization.

The energy-civilization equation originated in the early nineteenth century. Prior to that time, the introduction of new energy sources was not linked to the advancement of culture. Take the example of the Middle Ages, which witnessed a great power revolution. Although the waterwheel, windmill and effective harnesses for draft animals transformed social and economic life, no medieval thinker was ever moved to claim that they were the ultimate sources of the cultural and spiritual achievements of the time.

The rose window of Chartres, the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, or any other of the accomplishments of the age were never related to the energy that had recently been put to new and practical uses. And conversely, medieval man never feared that dry streams, windless days and bad harnesses would mark the end of his civilization. Yet, by the

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1800s, the energy-civilization equation found easy acceptance, and claims and warnings of this sort were gaining in popularity.

The formulation of the energy-civilization equation was made possible by the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. The emergence of modern science and the subsequent identification of scientific and technical advancement with human progress provided the kind of intellectual environment in which a newly introduced power source would be dealt with differently than it had been in the Middle Ages. The Scientific Revolution created a world view in which energy and civilization could be directly related.

In the 17th century, Sir Francis Bacon listed the great inventions that had changed the course of civilization; they were the compass, gunpowder and the printing press. With the rapid growth of science and technology, it was an easy matter to extend Bacon's original list by adding new inventions. By the late 18th century, an obvious addition to that list was the steam engine, which produced large amounts of power and had noticeable social and economic effects. It quickly became the symbol of industrialization and the social, economic and cultural changes that accompanied it.

The steam engine appeared to offer strong evidence that energy could be converted into civilization. However, neither the steam engine nor any other mechanical device could provide a proper theoretical basis for the energy-civilization equation. Only the sciences could supply such a foundation, and they did so during the 19th century. First physics and chemistry and then the biological, social and behavioral

"THE VAST INCREASES IN ENERGY CONSUMPTION OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES HAVE NOT NECESSARILY ENHANCED OUR CHANCES OF REACHING A NEW STAGE IN CIVILIZATION."

sciences were called upon to offer theoretical justification for linking energy with civilization.

Among the great successes of nineteenth-century physics were the discovery of the laws of conservation of energy and the establishment of a science of thermodynamics. Early in the century scientists had their first glimpse into the possibility of energy conversion. At that time they were interested in the conversion of heat to light, light to chemical action, chemical action to motion, motion to electricity, electricity to magnetism and so forth.

Some men of science were not satisfied to confine the conversion series to the boundaries of the physics and chemistry laboratory. Is it not possible, they argued, to convert physical forces or energies into biological ones? After all, it occurs naturally every time an animal assimilates its food. And cannot the series be extended from the biological to the nervous forces that energize the nervous system? And why stop here? Can we not take the next step, the one that connects nervous forces to the mind and to the study of moral and intellectual energy?

If one answered "yes" to these questions, then there existed no theoretical barrier between the physical concept of energy and the moral and intellectual progress that characterized civilization. It was in this way that the energy-civilization equation finally found an apparently respectable place for itself among the sciences.

Once the path had been opened between physical energy and culture, it was possible to imagine energy conversion sequences that began in the firebox of a steam engine, or in the windings of an electric dynamo, and ended in the world of morality, social and intellectual concern and artistic creation. Most scientists preferred to work on the first few links of the sequence, links that were clearly empirical. On the other hand, there were those who saw no problem in speaking of vital mental and social energies and in determining their relationship to the energy of the physical sciences. Some cases in point:

*Wilhelm Ostwald, German chemist, 1919 Novel prize-winner and creator of Ostwald's energetic imperative: Do not waste energy! He attempted to develop an energetic basis for all the sciences.

*Henry Adams, American historian and author of the famous essay, "The Virgin and the Dynamo," which evaluated the effects of two great and different energies upon the course of Western civilization, concluding that the force of electricity was every bit as mysterious and powerful as the religious force produced by medieval Catholicism's veneration of the Virgin Mary.

*Frederick A. Soddy, British scientist, 1921 Nobel prize-winner and a pioneer in the study of the atom. Soddy believed atomic energy would lift civilization to heights undreamed of, if atomic warfare could be averted and a new economic system established for a more equitable distribution of goods and services.

*Henry Ford and Thomas A. Edison, who followed Soddy's lead in dealing with energy and economics. Ford proposed using an abandoned Muscle Shoals, Alabama, hydroelectric plant to produce enough cheap power to supply a city 75 miles long and 15 miles wide. Edison proposed financing the scheme through Energy Dollars, imprinted with a depiction of the hydroelectric plant because energy was the true basis of money. Politics intervened to kill the grandiose scheme.

And the energeticists marched on. The dreams of hydroelectric plants and a new society persisted to the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration, when they became part of the Tennessee Valley Authority program. The TVA mystique was to reappear in such unlikely and remote areas of the world as Aswan, Egypt, and the Mekong River delta in Vietnam.

It would be foolish to argue that hydroelectrical establishments have no influence on their social and intellectual milieu. However, it is also true that they have not created the revolutionary changes promised by their promoters. We have yet to create a new civilization merely because we harnessed the power of some wild river. There remains a considerable gap between the Utopian societies projected and the economic and ecological liabilities of power dam construction.

I have touched upon but a few of the many manifestations of the energy-civilization formulation. Sigmund Freud linked sexual energy, and its sublimation, to civilization. Some current anthropological and sociological thought links energy and cultural achievements. There is astronomical speculation that ranks the civilizations of yet to be discovered extraterrestrial beings according to their supposed access to different amounts of energy. The disclosure of new energy sources—coal, petroleum, the atom, the sun—is accompanied by highly exaggerated claims that they would be the basis for a new society and a higher civilization. Finally, a National Science Foundation course describes energy as follows: "Energy is the source and control of all things, all values and all the actions of human beings and nature." That is the sort of description that at one time would have sufficed to define God!

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Having resolved the historical question of the origins and diffusion of the energy-civilization equation, we are still left wondering about its ultimate validity.

In this equation, slight increases or decreases in energy use cause large fluctuations in the level of civilization. If man uses less coal or electricity, then he is surely doomed to wear animal furs, gnaw on bones and pass his time shaping stone tools. On the other hand, if he only adopts solar, fusion or some other new energy source, then the gates of the Garden of Eden will be opened to him. We should be suspicious of a formulation that places mankind so precariously between apocalypse and utopia. And we should be cautious in accepting an equation that does not reflect the fact that the vast increases in energy consumption over the past few decades have not necessarily enhanced our changes of reaching a new stage in civilization.

Perhaps one reason why our rapidly increasing energy consumption has not placed us upon a new plateau of civilization is the way in which we choose to use that excess energy. The crude formula linking civilization with energy has no place for questions of choice. It deals with

"THERE IS A GREAT DANGER IN ASSUMING THAT CULTURAL ATTAINMENTS MUST WAIT UPON THE FULFILLMENT OF CREATURE COMFORTS."

energy expended per capita and does not ask if the energy was squandered on trivialities, wasted in destructive wars, or utilized to advance the social, moral and cultural accomplishments we identify with civilization.

Another weakness of the equation grows out of the vague way energy is defined within its context. There is no quarrel when the term is limited to the physical domain. But what are we to make of the analogical reasoning that led to the writing of serious essays on moral energy, sexual energy or religious energy?

If the energy-civilization formulation encouraged the loose definition of energy, what did it do for the definition of civilization? Immediately we are faced with an entirely different situation. Energy has its roots in the physical sciences, so that no matter how it is misapplied the original concept maintains its integrity. Civilization, on the contrary, never has had the kind of precise determination we associate with an accepted scientific concept. Civilization has always been a value-laden word that has changed over time and has been redefined again and again in order to meet current political, social or cultural needs or desires. It is an ill-fated formula that would attempt to link closely two such disparate entities as energy and civilization.

Yet, even if we attempt to make the equation workable by focusing upon one nation at a given time and assuming that its people will agree on what is meant by civilization, we find grave difficulties. When the English economist and philosopher Stanley Jevons was predicting the imminent decline of British civilization in the 1860s, he supposed that coal, iron and railroads had raised England to the pinnacle of culture. Not so, responded the contemporary literary critic Matthew Arnold. Let us suppose, said Arnold, that two hundred years from now England was to be swallowed up by the sea. Then, when the rest of the world recalled England's greatness, they would undoubtedly remember the Age of Shakespeare as her golden hour and not the time of Alfred Lord Tennyson and Queen Victoria. The Elizabethans managed quite well without the steam engine to produce a culture that is admired throughout the world.

Should a twentiety-century opponent choose to enter into the debate with Matthew Arnold over this matter, he would probably draw upon statistics proving modern superiority in life expectancy, literacy, nutrition, public hygiene, speed of transportation, equality of opportunity and so on. In short, he would shift the argument to the arenas of quality of life and economic growth. Matthew Arnold would reply to his modern critic as he did to Jevons, by defining national greatness as that quality that excites love, interest and admiration for a nation and its deeds. And Arnold would be correct in doing so, because throughout its history the energy-civilization equation has stressed the highest cultural achievements of man, and not the more mundane aspects of his life. After all, the steam engine was praised not merely because it could pump drinking water to city dwellers but because it was a dispenser of culture.

A persistent critic would then respond that there just might be a connection between the availability of potable water and the creation of high culture. Must not the artist and scientist be fed, clothed and sheltered before he can address himself to artistic and scientific affairs? There is no simple reply to this question. However, I believe it calls for something far more profound than the energy-civilization equation, which has often been put forth as the definitive answer.

There is a great danger in assuming that cultural attainments must wait upon the fulfillment of creature comforts,

"THE ELIZABETHANS MANAGED QUITE WELL WITHOUT THE STEAM ENGINE TO PRODUCE A CULTURE THAT IS ADMIRED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD."

that man could not study the stars, think about gods or ornament a piece of pottery until he had a full stomach, a roof over his head and a wall around his city. The more historians and anthropologists learn about the early history of mankind, the more they are convinced that science, religion, and art were always part of his existence, and not refinements he cultivated after reaching a certain stage of economic stability. Neither historical nor anthropological research supports the popular view that economic necessity is prior to, and prepares the way for, the moral, intellectual and aesthetic life of man. Therefore I, for one, would reject the simple correlation of energy consumption, economic growth and civilization.

In the final analysis, it is not crucial that all of my criticisms of the energy-civilization equation be accepted. It is much more important that the equation is recognized as a pervasive, if often implicit, element in both popular and sophisticated approaches to energy and society. If the equation is as worthless and potentially dangerous as I think it is, then it should be exposed and discarded, because it supplies a supposedly scientific argument against our efforts to adopt a style of living based upon lower levels of energy consumption. If it is a generalization of great truth, then it deserves a more refined handling than it has received from its supporters to date.

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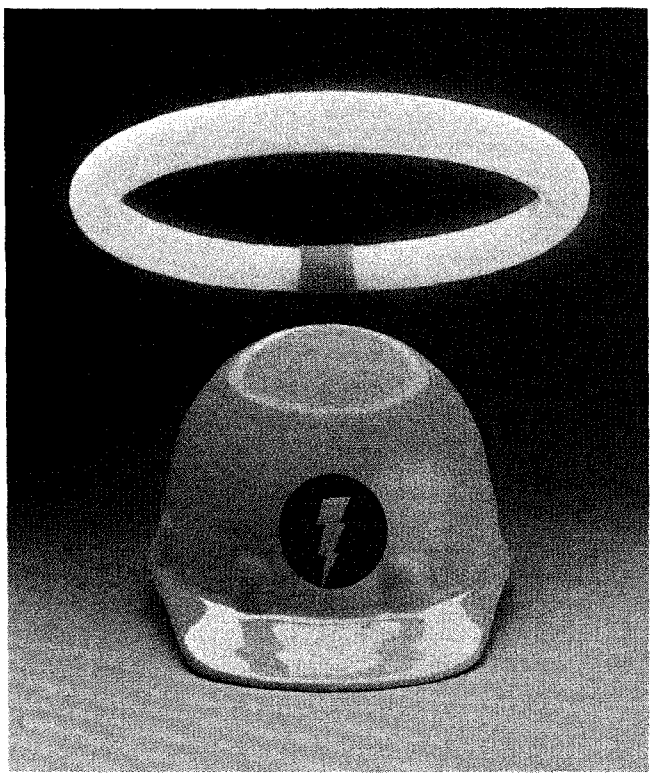
POWER INDUSTRY MORALITY



by Alasdair MacIntyre

We are in one of those phases, recurrent in American history, in which morality has been rediscovered yet once again. It is characteristic of such phases that a hunt for scapegoats ensues, focusing our concerns in precisely the wrong way on precisely the wrong issues. Blaming and punishing individuals becomes a substitute for asking what it was in the structures of our common life that at the very least made possible and perhaps even positively engendered moral fault and failure.

The present fashionable concern with morality in general and the practice of scapegoating in particular concentrate their concern almost exclusively upon breaches of the kind of moral rule that tells us only what we ought not to do. Our very concern with an emphasis upon negative, prohibiting rules leads us to lose sight of what is, in fact, centrally important to morality and thus, in turn, to fail to give due importance to these self-same negative, prohibiting rules.

The record of the electric power industry, in abstaining from breaking such negative, prohibiting rules, is by and large an exemplary one. Paradoxically enough, insofar as I am inclined to question the moral resources of the electric power industry, it is because in one way its moral record is as good as it is. The morality of the industry has been essentially a negative one of proved abstinence from wrong-doing.

Since the end of the Great Depression, the electric power industry has inflexibly interpreted its legally mandated task, at the heart of which is the requirement to supply electric power on demand. The American electric power industry not only supplied power with a success unparalleled in human history, but actually participated in creating the demand that made that success necessary to the rest of American industry. All this was achieved in such a way that neither the more general question: "Growth for what?" nor the more specific question: "Electric power for what?" needed to be raised, let alone answered. Those questions implicitly were held to be questions only for consumers, just as questions of the legal constraints to be imposed on the provision and use of electric power were held to be questions for the Congress and for citizens.

The morality required and practiced by the industry was generally a strict morality of non-intervention in every area but that which it and others regarded as its own legitimate realm. There was one positive aspect to the morality: its basic assumption, so firmly held as scarcely needing to be stated, was that the providing of electric power within the limits set by these negative constraints was an unqualified good.

Environmental concerns did not emerge until the very end of the period about which I am speaking; and the obvious connections between the provision of electric power and the possibilities both of providing employment for an increasing work force and of increasing the comfort of domestic life reinforced this assumption. The consequence was that a whole range of decisions came to be treated as purely or almost purely technical decisions to be handed over to the economists and the engineers: what types of plant should be built, where should they be sited, at what points should investment be made, what skills did the industry need. Congress provided the mandate, the consumer provided the data for prediction, the executives of the industry provided the commercial integrity and the skills for answering such questions, but the questions themselves were technical, not moral.

"THE ENERGY CRISIS IS A CRISIS ABOUT OUR WHOLE WAY OF LIFE AND NOT JUST ABOUT ENERGY."

The electric power industry—and in this it has been no different from the rest of us in modern society—has allowed its moral perspectives to be defined too much in terms of the negative prohibiting and constraining rules and not enough in terms of positive goods that ought to inform its tasks. It is those goods that provide the distinctive moral dimension in any definition of the future tasks of the electric power industry. We can very happily take for granted the need to observe the requirements of the negative rules; what we do need is a more explicit assertion of the industry's positive moral tasks.

One positive moral task of the industry is to assume a large public responsibility in areas that it has hitherto treated with a scrupulous but, if I am right, partly mis-

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placed respect as the responsibility either of the Congress or the executive branch of government or of the industrial, commercial and private consumer. That responsibility is to urge, cajole and compel our society to make certain choices and to make those choices in as open, as explicit and as rational a way as possible. There are two different kinds of reason why this responsibility falls to the electric power industry. The first is concerned with its unrivaled strategic position in the supply of power and with the scale and scope of its resources, especially the industry's accumulation of relevant knowledge and relevant skills. Both government and the general public have to learn what are the applications and consequences of alternative energy sources under specific local conditions of particular communities and environments. Engineering, economic, environmental and social considerations are going to have to be presented within a framework of political choice.

It is perhaps obvious that the members of the electric power industry are, as a group, uniquely well-fitted to present such choices. It would be required of them that they transcend their position as one special interest group among others. Would we then be asking them to become moral supermen? There is no simple, glib answer. But part of the complex answer is that we have asked no less from a variety of special interest groups in times of national crisis, especially during the Second World War.

The second type of reason for suggesting that the industry has this special and relatively new responsibility is that so far those who have been conveniently assigned this task by the democratic process have signally failed to discharge it in any but the most inadequate ways.

We have in our society only two institutionalized methods for coordinating individual preferences and transforming them into public choices: those of the market and its allied institutions, and those of government legislation, taxation and regulation. It is scarcely surprising that public debate has focused, explicitly and implicitly, on energy questions as elsewhere on the choice between those two, and that the form of public debate has been largely that of an indictment of each of these methods by

"THERE ARE GREAT MORAL AS WELL AS PRACTICAL DANGERS IN MAKING TOO MANY LARGE-SCALE IRREVERSIBLE INVESTMENT DECISIONS THAT FORECLOSE ON FUTURE CHOICES."

the proponents of the other. The sad fact of course is that both parties are right; both methods are grossly defective, and specifically so with respect to the kind of choices that our society now needs to formulate.

Consider first some defects of the mechanisms of the market. Markets only provide mechanisms for coordinating individual preferences once those preferences have been formulated and expressed in acts of consumption. The market, therefore, is of no help to us in those areas of life where we have to decide what our patterns of consumption are to be, how our preferences are to be ranked, how our desires are to be ordered. The debate on energy is centrally about investment; and it is a debate that has to be conducted within what Daniel Bell has felicitously called the "public household." We need to reason together in order to discover with what choices we want to enter the market. We are, that is to say, at a point in the argument where to tell us to rely on the mechanisms of the market is not so much mistaken as irrelevant.

There are weaknesses and defects in our system of political decision-making that correspond precisely to the weaknesses and defects of the market. It, like the market, is responsive to the pressures of the present much more rationally than to those of the future, partly because our ability to predict the future accurately is in general extraordinarily limited. And it, like the market, is far more effective at expressing already formulated choices on familiar issues than at formulating new possibilities of choice in unfamiliar areas. Neither the market nor the political system will provide the ordinary citizen with an adequate arena for formulating and expressing radically new choices of the kind that the energy debate thrusts upon us. And if public discussion that will enable ordinary citizens to formulate and express radically new choices does not take place, then the political and economic outcomes will inevitably be sadly defective.

But who is to begin the debate neceseary to supplement our conventional economic and political institutions? Who is to educate the educators? I see very few individuals or institutions who are both capable of taking up this task and who possess the resources and the strategic position to carry it through, apart from those individuals and institutions comprised by the electric power industry. Their work compels them to interact with both producers and consumers at essential points. They have a peculiar responsibility, which arises from the fact that if they do not discharge it, it is unlikely that anyone else will. If the industry does embark on this task, it will perhaps be accused of trying to preempt the democratic process; but if it does not take action that will render it liable to such accusations, the democratic process itself may fail us.

What then is the task, and why does it have moral dimensions? In order to answer this question, I shall have to state briefly and unoriginally what I take the energy crisis to be. There is no more of a shortage of available energy now than at any other time; what has suddenly become unavailable is energy at the kind of low price to us to which we had become accustomed. What we now have to debate is what we are prepared to pay for what and to whom and how are we going to pay for it. The major possibility that we confront is of a gigantic shift in patterns of investment. And if we invest massively in new energy sources or in new ways and to new extents in existing sources, then we shall necessarily be shifting our investment away from something else important to our lives. Hence the energy crisis is a crisis about our whole way of life and not just about energy.

It is not difficult to see that when we rethink the wide range of questions facing America as questions about energy, four different kinds of moral concern must arise. The first is a concern for complexity. Oversimplification, the sacrifice of complexity, is in fact a crucial form of the vice of untruthfulness. Yet this is not the only morally damaging harm that is likely to arise from oversimplification of the issues. Just because so many different kinds of issues of policy and practice interlock at the point of energy use, there is no simple way to assess the costs and benefits that will arise from any particular proposal. How, for example, are we to weigh as considerations relevant to the same proposal the harm of damage to the environment against the harm of making fewer jobs available to those who badly need work, and both against the harm of injury and death to a certain number of presently unidentifiable individuals? It is always much easier for us to consider these issues in a piecemeal, local way, in which some particular compromise—determined through bargaining by

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cal circumstances and balance of power—will, in the ıort run, at least, satisfy the particular, local contending ırties. Our whole political and legislative process is ased towards oversimplified statements of problems ıd, consequently, not only oversimplified but unjust ılutions.

Because our culture possesses no general set of stanırds that will enable us to evaluate costs and benefits of ry different types in a single rational argument, it is all e more important that our evaluations satisfy two minial requirements of justice. The first is that everyone levantly involved—and where energy is concerned that eans everyone—should have a chance to say what is to unt as a cost and what as a benefit. The second is that, so r as possible, those who receive the benefits should also e those who pay the costs and vice versa. Neither the rmer nor the latter principle has received anything like dequate attention in recent debates. When environentalists urge policies that will significantly reduce the

"ENVIRONMENTALISTS IN THE PRESENT HAVE SOMETIMES BEEN AS UNTRAMMELED IN ENDANGERING OTHER PEOPLE'S JOBS AS INDUSTRIALISTS IN THE PAST WERE IN ENDANGERING OTHER PEOPLE'S INVESTMENTS."

umber of jobs that might otherwise be available, it is rely, perhaps never, the case that they are able to show *ither* that those who would lose their opportunities of ork are the same people who would benefit from the nvironment *or* that those who would lose their opporınities to work have had a part in shaping the conception nd criteria of costs and benefits involved. Environentalists in the present have sometimes been as untramıeled in endangering other people's jobs as industrialists ı the past were in endangering other people's investıents. Equally, when opponents of nuclear power staions urge policies that will significantly increase our uture dependence on coal, the lives that will be lost as a esult of their policies are not their own. Justice demands ot only that everyone have a voice and a vote, but that ome people—the populations that will bear the relevant sks and dangers, or most of them—have more of a voice nd more of a vote than others.

There is at least one further requirement that must be iet if justice is to be served. Because the energy crisis is rimarily a crisis about the investment of resources, ordiary citizens are going to have no opportunity to undertand how the costs and benefits of different investment olicies do and will impinge upon them, if the costs are ystematically concealed by subsidy. For the inhabitants f most advanced countries, the cheapness of energy to the onsumer in the past 50 years has disguised its true costs. Ordinary citizens respond to their everyday experience nd, if their everyday experience conceals what they are eally paying for energy in all sorts of disguised ways, hen no amount of theoretical education is likely to succeed. Only if there is a widespread perception of what the osts and benefits of different energy policies are can we lecide both democratically and rationally how it is just to listribute costs and benefits.

Justice and truthfulness are not the only virtues central to determining energy production and use. Another is the ability to live with unpredictability.

We need to plan on a large scale, but we also have to recognize that our plans are for a future that is always apt to surprise us with its unexpectedness. In part, our social future is unpredictable because of the ways in which the future development of mathematics, science and technology are unpredictable. An obvious and obviously crucial example is the mathematics of Turing or of von Neumann, work essential to the development of modern computing science and engineering, and work whose outcome could not have been rationally predicted in advance.

In changing the social world and its national environment, we also change ourselves. No matter how sophisticated our social planning with respect to energy or to anything else, we can never rule out the possibility that in the course of implementing our plans we shall acquire views, interests and desires markedly different from those that led us to draw up and implement our original plans. Hence it is crucial that our planning is not so inflexible that it leaves our future selves—let alone successor generations—with no or few options acceptable to them because we were, at an early stage, too rigidly insistent on what is now acceptable to us.

It follows that there are great moral as well as practical dangers in making too many large-scale irreversible investment decisions that foreclose on future choices. This is especially a danger because the urgency of our immediate needs always tempts us towards short-term solutions.

Some of my statements about justice might seem supportive to the advocates of massive investment in nuclear power, while what I am now saying about the need for an ability to live with unpredictability may seem to endorse what some of their critics have said. But what matters at this juncture is not so much the particular policy implications of particular points; rather, it is the need to underline the fact that we ought not to expect moral considerations all to point in one single policy direction. There is a genuinely tragic dimension to the energy debate in that any particular policy direction is going to involve the sacrifice of some authentic goods for the sake of others. Our culture lacks any clear sense of how to handle tragic situations, situations that reveal our moral and human limitations in relation to the tasks imposed upon us.

Because we have never learned to face up to our moral limitations, we have lost to a large degree our vision of positive possibility. We have trudged for so long into a future of apparently limitless consumption that we do not now find it easy to remember who we are and what links us to others. The notion of possibility is always the notion of some future form of community that provides us now with standards and goals by which to diagnose our various forms of inadequacy and to set about remedying them. Just such a common vision—partial, not always coherent, but providing the essential sustenance for our constitution—was implicit in the founding of this republic.

What I am suggesting is this: that to press forward in the public arena the debate about energy, in such a way as to make its moral dimensions clear so far as possible to the whole society, will reveal to that society that it is, to a degree that a good deal of political rhetoric conceals from us, involved in a moral crisis as well as in an energy crisis. The prospect is a dismaying one and requires courage: we do not know how to reason together morally in an effective way. And this lack—just because it is something wanting in the social order as a whole—will never be remedied unless we face it as a society.

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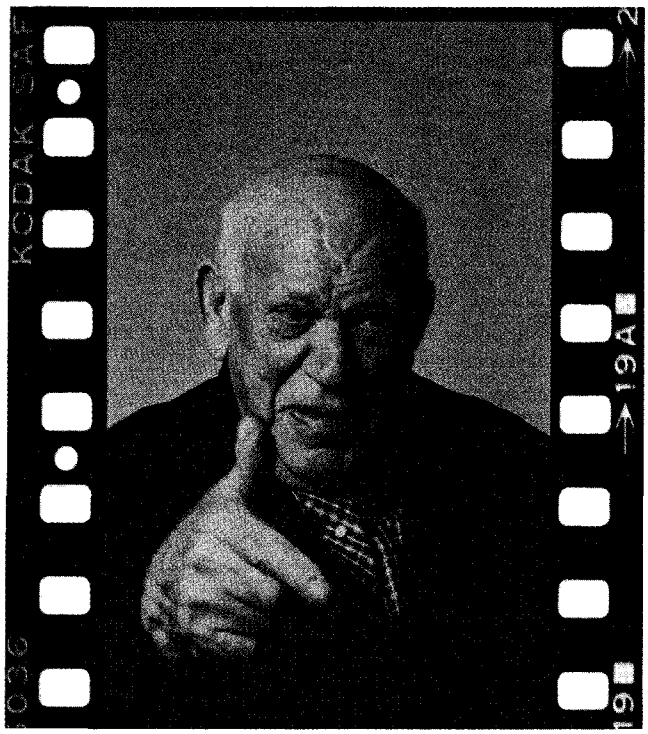
BEWARE THE INTELLECTUAL

by Eric Hoffer



From the early days of the Industrial Revolution, intellectuals of every sort predicted that the machine would make man superfluous. Right now, it would be difficult to find a social scientist who does not believe that automated machines and computers are eliminating man as a factor in the social equation.

The belief that the machine turns men into robots is an a priori assumption that prevents social scientists from seeing that technology is doing precisely the opposite of what they predicted it would do. There is evidence on every hand that the human factor has never been so central as it is now in technologically advanced countries. And it is the centrality of the human factor that makes industrial societies at present so unpredictable.

In the 19th century, which saw a Promethean effort to master and harness nature, little thought was given to the management of man. The ruling middle class could proceed on the principle that government is best when it governs least. Everyday life had a fabulous regularity. Obedience of authority was as automatic as a reflex movement. Social processes were almost as rational and predictable as the processes of nature. It was reasonable to believe in the possibility of a social science as exact as a natural science.

There was also boundless hope, a belief in automatic progress that imbued people with patience.

Mr. Hoffer, the self-educated author of numerous books on social philosophy, is a former migratory worker, gold miner and longshoreman.

Then came the 20th century! Have there ever been tv successive centuries so different from each other as tl 19th and the 20th?

The 19th century was stable, predictable, rational, hop ful, free, fairly peaceful and lumpy with certitudes.

The 20th century has been hectic, soaked with the bloc of innocents, fearful of the future, stripped of certitude unpredictable and absurd. The history of the 20th centu is a succession of disastrous absurdities: the First Wor War, the Russian Revolution, the Versailles Peace Treat Prohibition, the wild '20s, the Great Depression, the Ro sevelt Administration, the Hitler Revolution, the Secor World War, the Holocaust, the absurd 1960s and now tl Carter Presidency.

What was it that made the 20th century so different fro the 19th? The First World War was the sharp dividing lir between the two centuries. But it was not the First Wor War itself, but its aftermath, that shaped our centur Without the breakdown of Czarist Russia and the humili tion of Germany by the Versailles Treaty, there woul have been neither a Lenin nor a Hitler Revolution.

We have the testimony of highly reliable observers o the fabulous stability and hopefulness of the pre-w decade. To Alfred North Whitehead, who was immerse in the new physics, "the period 1880 to 1914 was one of tl happiest times in the history of mankind."

It is impressive how logic and hope kept 19th centu thinkers from contemplating an unpleasant, let alor apocalyptic, denouement as the fulfillment of the Indu trial Revolution. Few in the 19th century were aware of th explosive irrationality of the human condition. No or suspected that once nature had been mastered, industri societies would enter a psychological age in which ma would become a threat to mankind's survival.

No one foresaw the disintegration of values and th weakening of social discipline caused by the eliminatio of scarcity. A logician like Marx could not foresee th downfall of capitalism by ever-increasing efficiency rath than by ever-increasing misery. Hardly anyone in the 19t century foresaw the chronic unemployment and the loss a sense of usefulness caused by increased ambition. N one feared that drastic change would upset traditions, cu toms and other arrangements that make life predictabl Finally, no one foresaw that the education explosion mac possible by advanced technology would swamp societi with hordes of educated nobodies who want to be som bodies and end up being mischief-making busybodies.

Strangely, those whom thinkers of the 19th centu viewed with alarm were the masses. Some thought that th masses loathed continuity and that their clamor for chang would topple all that was noble and precious. Othe believed that, once the masses were given political powe only education and prosperity could preserve social stabi ity. How naive to believe in a stabilizing power of pro perity and education after we have seen what affluenc and education have done!

To Freud, it seemed that individuals composing th

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isses support one another in giving free reign to their liscipline. No one had an inkling that anarchy, when it ne, would originate not in the masses but in violent norities, including the minority of the educated. erything that was said about the anarchic propensities the masses fits perfectly with the behavior of students, ofessors, writers, artists and the hangers-on during the hteous '60s.

The masses are the protagonists of stability, continuity d law and order. It is curious that Disraeli—remarkable in—should have had a truer world view of the nature of e masses than his liberal contemporaries. He sensed the nservatism and patriotism of common people. Could it that, as a genuine conservative, Disraeli was more uned to the eternal verities of man's existence? Con-

THE INTELLECTUAL IS IN HIS LEMENT COMMANDING, COERCING, BRAINWASHING ND IN GENERAL MAKING EOPLE LOVE WHAT THEY IATE."

dering also how timely and relevant were Disraeli's eas about what makes nations strong and great, it is gitimate to wonder whether you have to be a conserva- e if you want to be up to date.

The 20th century saw not only the fulfillment of the dustrial Revolution but also the fulfillment of wars anted in the preceding century. There is hardly an atroc- perpetrated in the 20th century that had not been advo- ted by some intellectual in the 19th.

The 19th century was dominated by men of action; the tellectuals just talked. And no one expected savage ords to have consequence. The intellectuals entered the th century convinced that it was going to be their cen- ry. Had they not made the French Revolution? They saw emselves as the coming ruling class. But the Industrial evolution gave power to the middle class, and the intel- ctuals were left out in the cold.

It is the predicament of the middle class that, although it cels in mastering things, it is awkward and almost help- ss when it comes to managing men. Thus, when the man factor became more and more central, the middle ass, drained of confidence by the First World War and a eat Depression, found itself in deep trouble.

The stage was set for the entrance of the intellectuals. To intellectual, power means power over man. He cannot nceive of power moving mountains and telling rivers here to flow. He is in his element commanding, brain- ashing and in general making people love what they ite. He glories in the role of medicine man and charis- atic leader. And feels godlike when he makes words come flesh. Thus, he has made the 20th century a cen- ry of words par excellence. In no other century have ords become so dangerous. A failure to recognize this ct can have disastrous consequences.

Now, viewed from any vantage point, the 19th century as a sharp historical deviation. About 150 years ago, the ccident was catapulted into a trajectory away from the ncient highway of history. We can now see that the trajec- ry is the loop that turns upon itself and is curving back where it started. We can see all around us the linea- ents of a pre-industrial pattern emerging in post-indus- ial society. We are not plunging ahead into the future, t falling back into the past. The explosion of the young, the dominance of the intellectuals, the savagery of our cities, the revulsion from work are all characteristics of the decades that preceded the Industrial Revolution. We are returning to the rocky highway of history and are rejoin- ing the ancient caravan.

The significant point is that the people who are rejoin- ing the ancient caravan are not what they were in pre- industrial days. They are more dangerous. The unspeaka- ble atrocities of the 20th century have demonstrated that man is the originator of a great evil that threatens the sur- vival of mankind. The central problem of the post-indus- trial age is how to cope with this human evil.

It is conceivable that if the exhaustion of raw materials and sources of energy make it imperative for a society to tap the creative energies of its people, it may in doing so also tap a new source of social discipline, for the creative individual, no matter how highly endowed, must be hard- working and disciplined if he's to accomplish much.

There is no invention that will take the hard work out of creating. Moreover, since the creative flow is never abun- dant, the greatest society is likely to be disciplined by a new chronic scarcity. The trouble is that the coming of the creative society will be slow and faltering, and we must find other defenses against evil.

What I'm going to advocate may seem far-fetched. But in this case, all suggestions are legitimate. As things are now, it may well be that the survival of the species will depend upon the capacity to foster a boundless capacity for compassion. In the alchemy of man's soul, almost all noble attributes—courage, love, hope, faith, beauty, loy- alty—can be transmuted into ruthlessness. Compassion alone stands apart from the continuous traffic between good and evil proceeding within us. Compassion is the antitoxin of the soul. Where there is compassion, even the poisonous impulses remain relatively harmless.

Compassion seems to have its roots in the family. It is conceivable that the present weakening of the family may allow compassion to leak out into wider circles. So, too, the cultivation of esprit de corps, which is the creation of family ties between strangers, may spread compassion.

The question is: can we make people compassionate by education? It is natural to assume that the well-educated are more humane and compassionate than the uneducated. But, believe it or not, the reverse seems to be true. When Gandhi was asked what it was that worried him most, he replied, "The hardness of heart of the educated."

We have seen the highly educated German nation give its allegiance to the most murderously vengeful govern- ment in history. The bloody-minded professors in the Kremlin, as Churchill called them, liquidated 60 million Russian men, women and children. We have also seen a band of graduates of the Sorbonne, no less, slaughter and starve millions of innocents in Cambodia and Vietnam. The murder weapons that may destroy our society are being forged in the work factories of our foremost univer- sities. In many countries, universities have become the chief recruiting ground of mindless terrorists.

I've never been a teacher or a parent, and my heart is savage by nature and therefore unfit to tell people how to implant compassion. Still, I have the feeling that perhaps the adoption of a certain view of life might bear the fruit of compassion. We feel close to each other when we see our planet as a tiny island of life in an immensity of nothing- ness. We also draw together when we become aware that night must close in on all living things, that we are con- demned to death at birth and that life is a bus ride to the place of execution. All of our struggling and vying is about seats in the bus, and the ride is over before we know it.

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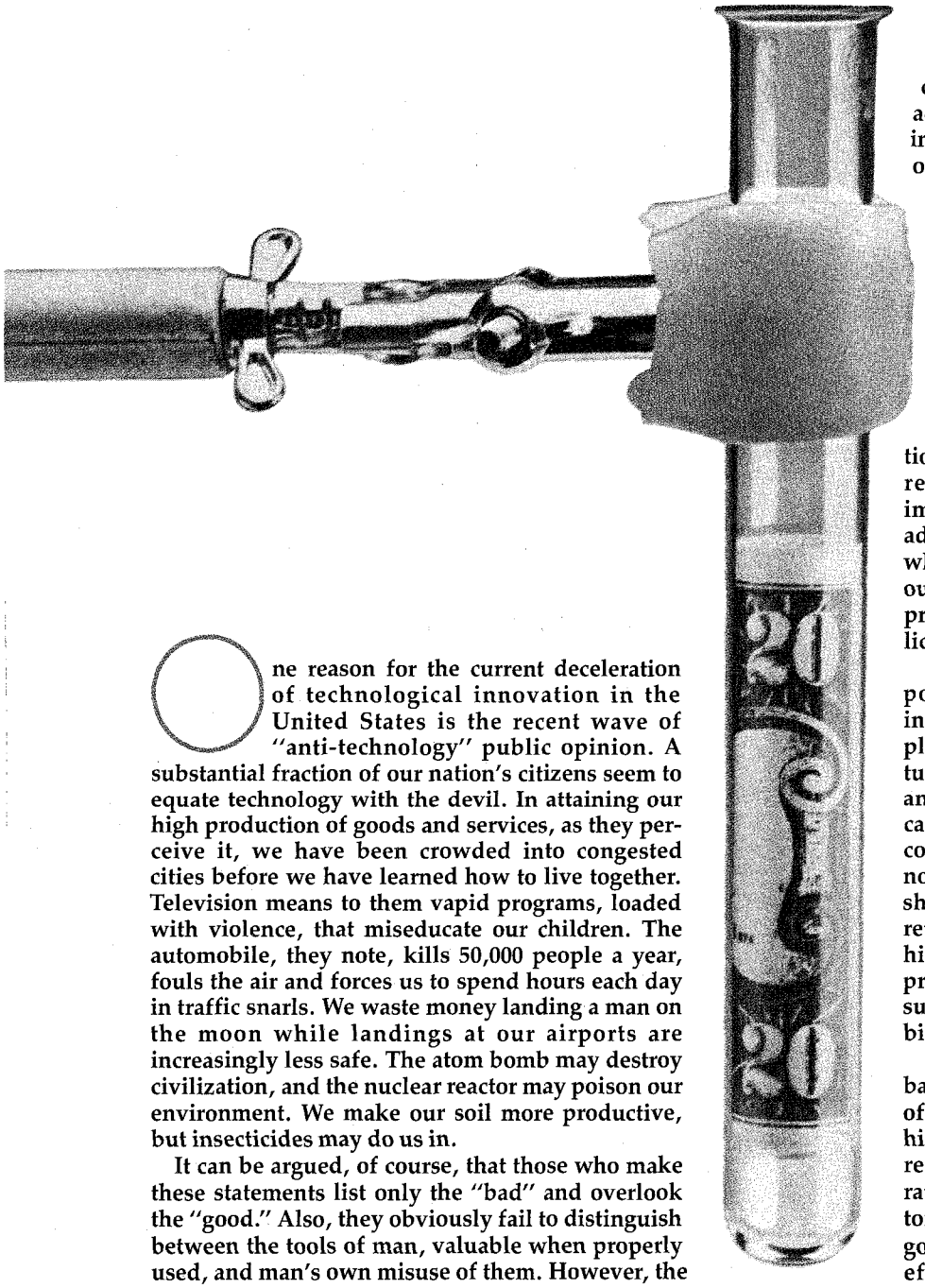
CAN SCIENCE TURN A PROFIT?

by Simon Ram



One reason for the current deceleration of technological innovation in the United States is the recent wave of "anti-technology" public opinion. A substantial fraction of our nation's citizens seem to equate technology with the devil. In attaining our high production of goods and services, as they perceive it, we have been crowded into congested cities before we have learned how to live together. Television means to them vapid programs, loaded with violence, that miseducate our children. The automobile, they note, kills 50,000 people a year, fouls the air and forces us to spend hours each day in traffic snarls. We waste money landing a man on the moon while landings at our airports are increasingly less safe. The atom bomb may destroy civilization, and the nuclear reactor may poison our environment. We make our soil more productive, but insecticides may do us in.

It can be argued, of course, that those who make these statements list only the "bad" and overlook the "good." Also, they obviously fail to distinguish between the tools of man, valuable when properly used, and man's own misuse of them. However, the presence in the nation of a broad anti-technology bias, applied indiscriminately, impairs our overall ability to reach objective, sound, non-emotional decisions on the development and employment of technology. This prejudice, like all prejudices, stands in the way of our arriving at meaningful value judgments.

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The majority of the public in the Unite States does not seem to understand the fu damental necessity for a strong program advancing technology to meet the public's ow insistent requirements to have a growing standa of living, low unemployment and tolerable (th is, small) inflation rates.

We have two routes for initiatives to g things done in the U.S.: free enterprise ar government. Without a high degree of coo eration between the government and th private sector, and public understanding the need for this cooperation, technologic advance in the U.S. will be highly constraine Because the government is so important in set ing the environment for technological innov tion and because innovative capability in the U.S resides almost entirely in private industry improved organization to accomplish benefici advancing of technology depends on the extent which a harmonious ensemble can be organize out of the three ingredients: government polic private investment and implementation, and pul lic support.

Currently, inflation, government spending, ta policies, and over-regulation have impaire industry earnings and lowered available funds f plowback to create technological advances. Unfo tunately, an increasing fraction of the most neede and potentially beneficial technological projec call for investments beyond the net worth of mo corporations, and large corporations in the U.S now are essentially not allowed to team up t share the risk. For such projects, the "risk-to return" ratio is too great, the start-up losses are to high, the time to "turn-around" to an eventua profit phase is too long and the dependence success on unpredictable political decisions is fo biddingly close.

The lack of industry incentive to invest funds t back innovation goes with the other characteristic of the U.S. environment: inflation, high taxes high costs in dealing with government regulator requirements, high consumption-to-investmer ratios, and high ratio of government to private se tor spending. Given the state of the economy, n government program to stimulate more innovativ effort and R&D in private industry could b nearly so effective as a successful governmen program to lower inflation, or one to cause mor discretionary cash flow to be available to technologic corporations by a lowering of taxes. If the governmer could create these changes, the seeds of scientific an technological advance would quickly blossom int copious crops. Here are some examples that illustrate th relation of the rate of application of technological advanc to economic-political constraints.

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OIL WELL TECHNOLOGY

If existing U.S. continental oil wells were equipped ith submergible pumps for secondary and tertiary recov- y wherever warranted, our oil reserves would be greatly creased (perhaps even doubled, the experts tell us). chnologically, such installations are thoroughly prac- al. Most often, the installations would be economically asible as well, if the price per barrel were higher than esent controls permit for old oil, i.e., in the range of ices the nation is paying now for imported oil. Billions dollars invested this way would bring us tens of bil- ons in equivalent additional petroleum. The critical pric- g parameter to make the private investment a sound one es outside the free market and is a political matter. Pric- g involves a contest among numerous influential constit- nts with wide differences of opinion of the issue. The ivate sector thus cannot justify investing the required nds.

IMPROVED URBAN TRANSPORTATION

Almost every large U.S. city could gain by installing a st class public transportation system. But it has to be the ght system. The technology has to be carefully selected d matched to each city's layout, industry pattern popu- tion and employment distribution, health care and edu- tion facilities. The economic gains could be prodigious. erhaps half our population could save hours each week ver present means for getting to and from work. They ould travel at less expense, consume less energy, cut air ollution and decrease the accident rate.

But is it intelligent for an American technological cor- oration to invest its resources with the objective of devel- ping, then selling, and finally earning a return from mass ansit systems for American cities? Consider Los Angeles an example. Imagine that some private company a few ears ago decided to devote several years of effort in fit- ng technology to L.A.'s social and economic needs and esigning the multi-billion dollar transit system required. hen, further assume, as we must to be realistic, that all e subsystems (vehicles, controls, communications, nergy distribution, safety, terminals, maintenance, rights f way, environmental reports, etc.) were out and ebugged.

All this would have involved an expenditure of a undred million dollars or more and would be only a eginning. Much of this effort would have had to be peated for other cities because of the importance of ringing prices down by realizing as much commonality s possible in equipment and software for multiple instal- tions. Then the private concern would have to design, uild and tool up several plants to start producing the ecifically required hardware, refine it by full-scale test- g and manufacture parts in some quantity to be sure of rice and quality before taking on contracts for shipment nd installation. If the company had gone this far (it ould by now have made over a billion-dollar invest- ent) and had done everything perfectly would it then ave succeeded in selling a system to Los Angeles? That is xtremely doubtful. Who exactly is this customer we have abeled Los Angeles? What does Los Angeles truly want nd how are its requirements being decided? Can Los ngeles raise the procurement funds? Hundreds of separate (and often quarrelling, apathetic or self-seeking) groups, both private and governmental, are involved in the answers to these questions.

Potentially beneficial as the proper application of transportation technology might be, the market in any given city is not formed. The "risk-to-return" ratio would be absurdly high for the private corporation electing to develop this field. The start-up cost would be huge. Even assuming eventual success, the time to payoff would be too long and the city or county government's eventual approach to the pricing of the service, fundamental to the promise of return on the private investment, would be too unpredictable.

ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY

Done suitably, with a mixture of creativity and common sense, the selective depolluting of major lakes, rivers, harbors and coastal waters stands to yield a good return on the investment in health, quality of life and economic gain through preservation and maintenance of vital natural resources. To achieve practical results, much more scientific research and technological work is needed to understand pollution phenomena more deeply, develop superior non-polluting approaches to use of the waters, and produce a myriad of specialized equipment. Of course, such technical effort would be meaningless or misguided without attention to all the complex interface problems.

What company, or group of companies, would invest in a private overall systems solution for, say, depolluting Lake Erie? This would mean their setting out, with their own funds, to settle the many interactions and to develop the new chemical processes, superior purification and fuel-burning methods, optimum energy-use techniques and the rest. Many specific and dificult scientific and engineering advances would be vital for an intelligent, broad changeover to an integrated lower pollution system. But in what context should the individual technological efforts be chosen? What criteria should be used? Even if a combine could be created of, say, five large corporations that among them possessed all the technical expertise required, how could they presume to design and install a system that would affect the economy and social makeup of the industrialized communities of millions of citizens distributed around the lake?

COAL

By all-out use of science and technology and the full cooperation of government and private industry (neither of which is in the cards today), we could have a plentiful supply of energy for hundreds of years by properly utilizing our huge reserves of coal. Existing technological beginnings can be advanced to desulphurize coal, produce liquid and gaseous fuel from it, mine it more safely, obtain a good deal of it without mining (in situ), burn it more cleanly and more fully and limit environmental harm. The resulting energy supply would be higher priced than today's oil, in part to write off the cost of the technological advancen but the funds to pay for the fuel would stay in the U.S.

Success requires both the know-how of private industry and enormous capital placed at risk. A corporation choosing to make a major entry into synthetic gas or liquid fuel from coal by new technology would have to commit funds in the range of billions of dollars, and decades might pass

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before a return on that investment could be realized. Indeed, such return might never come, so great are the risks associated with unpredictable government decisions on critical aspects. The complete "system" involves a host of private and public organizations that are semi-autonomous and not readily directed by any one body: landowners, mine operators, labor unions, railroads, power generating and water supply utilities, numerous engineering and manufacturing organizations, county and state governments and many, many agencies in the federal government that deal with prices, environment, labor and transport, to name only a portion. It is not difficult to appreciate why we are not moving very rapidly in developing and applying new coal technology.

Few doubt that energy will be more costly in the era ahead. But with a plentiful supply at the higher price level—in contrast to a subsidized, low-priced and low-quantity supply—the United States could prosper, some students of the problem would tell us. If we could bring ourselves to design a national program around the realistic expectancy of a gradually higher price (say, up to twice today's price), we might well discover that private investment would become available and private know-how would be applied to ensure adequate supplies. This would be, of course, because the return on investment would justify the investment. Such a program would require viewpoints by the government and the public differing from the present ones built around the politically popular, but unrealistic and inconsistent, policy that preaches conservation while subsidizing low-priced energy.

FUSION ENERGY

Controlled thermonuclear fusion has the possibility of providing us with cheap and plentiful energy. Many millions of dollars have already been spent trying to understand the underlying physics. It is estimated by most experts that decades will be required before all of the remaining physical scientific and engineering details are worked out sufficiently for this approach to energy supply to be ready for application. It may turn out that it never will prove feasible. The total costs in the start-up phase are in the billions of dollars, maybe in the tens of billions. When we have to speak of funding at such levels, time durations of decades, and major doubts as to basic technological feasibility, we are beyond the boundaries of areas suitable for speculative investment by private entities.

FUTURES

Now what does all this add up to? The high potential for science and technology to benefit the society more and at the same time the difficulty in obtaining the benefits; the inability of free enterprise to encompass more than a fraction of the sponsorship; the limitation on the capability of the government to take over where the private sector cannot provide the desirable advances. What views and policies should we promote as steps to improve the situation?

Let me offer some specific recommendations to the four concerned entities: the free enterprise sector, the government, the universities and the public.

Those interested in preserving the free enterprise system (such as leaders of big business and others who see the free market and the private enterprise concept as valuable routes toward utilization of advanced technology) should accept that ours is a hybrid society. It is not helpful and oftentimes harmful to press so hard, as the supporters of the private sector often do, for free enterprise to be labeled as the all-encompassing answer to problems. Free enterprise should be understood as able only to provide a part of our needs. A creative, cooperative relationship between the private sector and the government should be sought, and the often present adversary relationship should be eliminated.

Government leaders should recognize the government involvement in scientific and technological matters to be permanent and set a long-range policy for that involvement. It should answer such questions as: Which research and development areas must the government sponsor, and which are best left to free enterprise? How can the required regulatory duties of the government and the setting of the rules for free enterprise be handled so as to enhance and not impair national innovative effort?

The government should appreciate the broad impact of science and technology on virtually every important government decision-making area, and count a healthy scientific and technological effort in the country as vital to the overall national economy. The government should itself be innovative in creating a national environment for innovation. It should direct its sponsorship in scientific and technological matters toward the generation of information to remove risks and thus to enhance the contribution that can be made by free enterprise.

The government should resist the creating of new government research and development efforts and expenditures to enhance innovation in private industry. Instead the government should act on the premise that improved use of science and technology will quickly follow an improvement in the economy, this improvement characterized by less inflation, taxes and government spending with discretionary funds for investment in innovation more available to the private sector.

The universities should teach elementary economics to every graduate, so that at least these members of the citizenry would understand such concepts as cost of capital, return on investment, consumption-investment tradeoffs, causes of inflation and the fundamentals of the free enterprise system. The universities also should mount increased efforts to discover and develop innovative talent.

Furthermore, the research programs in the universities should be enhanced to include greater emphasis on the relationships between advancing science and technology and the social-political-economic structure of the nation. The universities should aspire to be a source of innovative ideas about innovation, including the articulating of alternatives for restructuring the nation's institutions so as to enhance the possibilities of our employing the tools of science and technology to the greatest advantage on behalf of the society.

The public would do well to foster neither of the two extreme views: free enterprise alone can do everything best; free enterprise is bad and the government must do everything. If the public is interested in the flexibility, freedom of opportunity, motivation and incentives of free enterprise, then it should recognize that free enterprise can only contribute to the nation's needed research and development if private industry is allowed to generate the necessary funds for investment. "Profits" should be applauded if they are reinvested boldly and wisely for research and development. Finally, the public should get over its anti-technology prejudices. It should decide once and for all that science and technology are not independent, external enemies but the public's own tools, and go on with seeing that these tools are used to achieve the goals the citizens choose.

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IN PRAISE OF SCIENCE

by Philip Handler

For two centuries, concern has occasionally welled up for the societal consequences of one or another technology. But until recently, science itself was viewed by society as an autonomous venture of high integrity whose conduct is best left to science. That wall has been breached, probably forever.

There's been public pressure not to undertake certain studies because of fear that society might not be able to live with the answers gained in investigations.

I cannot easily condone any abridgement of the freedom of scientific inquiry. Historically, freedom of inquiry, like freedom of speech, religion, the press and assembly came to be cherished precisely as the scientific search for truth freed mankind from dogmatic religious and political thought. Scientific inquiry has challenged the dogma of an authoritarian world for 400 years. It has freed men's minds as it has eased their toil. And it was Thomas Jefferson who said, "There is no truth on earth that I fear to be known."

Neither law nor tradition confer an absolute right of freedom from all restraints, but we need accept no constraints other than those found essential to protect other values that we cherish from injury. To use the power of government for the suppression of ideas—ideas that might otherwise flow from research—would take us back to an era of dogmatism. In the long run, it is impossible to stand in the way of the exploration of truth that someone will learn somewhere, sometime. It remains evident that science cannot be planned very far into the future. That we shall be surprised is the only certainty.

The governments of countries that plan central economies plan research and development to accelerate attainments of the societies they already have in mind. We refer to evolve, to accept a pluralistic approach to our future and to have the multiple instrumentalities of our society—universities, government, industry—engaged in the research and development that they find most appropriate, and then let us all choose, however awkwardly, which of their products to adopt.

We've little understanding of the factors that prompted the extraordinary acceleration of science in Europe two centuries ago—or the subtle circumstances that caused the technological torch to move from Europe to America a century later. Presumably, some blend of the frontier democracy, primitive capitalism and the entrepreneurial talents of a handful of inventors were involved. But we do know that we now live in an overpopulated, competitive, interdependent world that the United States no longer dominates; that many another once-powerful, prosperous, dominant civilization has disappeared; and that even now we are sharing the torch of technology with several other nations.

Few of us can readily believe that the United States could lose its prominent place in the world, as have other nations within our lifetimes. Somehow, we feel that the United States is exempt. And yet to think so is to fly in the face of history. Many nations at the apex of their power were inwardly doomed when their will power began to falter, and therefore we should be most careful about retreating from the specific challenges of our epoch.

Each noteworthy civilization has grappled with the great problem of its time. For the Greeks, it was the organization of society; for the Romans, the organization of empire; for the Medievalists, the spelling-out of their relationship to God; for the Europeans of the 15th and 16th centuries, mastery of the oceans. And for the last two centuries, it has been the scientific understanding of nature and the creation of an industrial society.

For tomorrow, the challenge is to continue these latter tasks. It is to determine how mankind can live in harmony on this finite globe, establish permanent relationships to its finite shrinking resources as well as with infinite space, and to enable achievement of the individual potentials of individual human beings as we reduce the ravages of disease. If instead, intent on a risk-free society, we succumb to a national failure of nerve, if we always heed the nay-sayers, then again Shakespeare will have been proved prescient in his lines: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat; and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures."

Those lines apply to America in the 1980s. Whatever other policies we follow, we can be unabashedly optimistic concerning the prospects for continuing great discoveries in every discipline of science. And yet we should note that even in science the international position of this country is changing. For two decades after the war, the United States conducted the largest, most powerful, most productive scientific endeavor in history, and it has never been more productive than at this moment. But the economic growth of other nations has enabled them also to develop their scientific potential. Today we constitute perhaps one-third of the world effort, albeit our enterprise still seems somewhat disproportionately successful. But it's clear that the others are rapidly gaining; since the fruits of science are universally available, we should be pleased, not dismayed, by that fact, but only so long as we maintain our own scientific capabilities.

Our current malaise stems from a few bad experiences—from the time-delay in meeting the high hopes and expectations raised in the minds of those who appreciate the great power of science, the force of technology. Those expectations have taken on a new light as science has also revealed the true condition of man on earth. And I see no alternative but to address rigorously the principal questions of science and to use our ever widening understanding or increasingly sophisticated technology with grace and charity and wisdom. We're not omnipotent, but neither are we unwitting foils of powerful forces over which we lack control. We've learned not to seek a perfect world. Our joy must be found in those acts by which we exercise our unique capabilities to eradicate what we abhor and to promote that which we value and cherish. I retain my faith that the science that has revealed the most awesome and profound beauties we have yet beheld is also the principal tool that our civilization has developed to mitigate the condition of man.

Dr. Handler has been President of the National Academy of Sciences since 1969.

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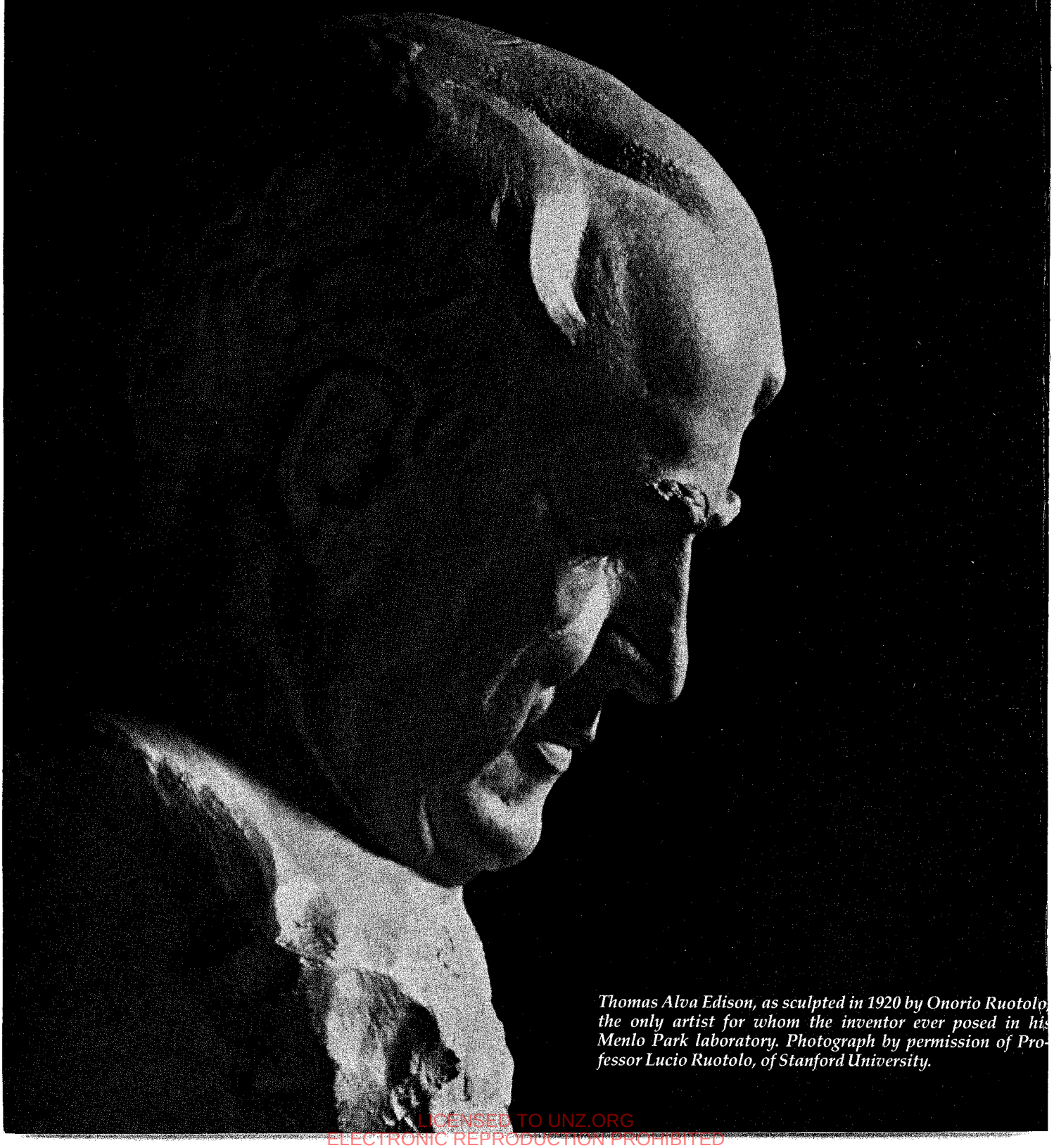
THOMAS ALVA EDISON
IN COMMEMORATION OF
THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE INVENTION OF THE
ELECTRIC LIGHT BULB



Thomas Alva Edison, as sculpted in 1920 by Onorio Ruotolo, the only artist for whom the inventor ever posed in his Menlo Park laboratory. Photograph by permission of Professor Lucio Ruotolo, of Stanford University.

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Deng Xiaoping was trying on 10-gallon hats in Houston and hustling businessmen in Atlanta. China's new leadership seems hungrier for multinational capital than for heroic production energies. The Peoples Republic has been negotiating joint ventures with dozens of multinationals. The new leadership has all but said the business of China is business.

An even more shocking development was the behavior of the Maoist "new-man-in-the-street" after the regime's grip loosened a bit last December. Despite his 30-year tutelage, the "new man" immediately raised a shocking hue and cry for the same creature comforts that clutter up the West. At the time, some wall posters called for free speech, some for free love, and some for other fatal steps down the road to free enterprise. The regime has since cracked down, but the dirty little secret is out. Three decades of the reign of virtue are not enough; corrupt hearts still hide themselves under fair words.

What finished off the concept of a third world and swept away the old moral agonizing about non-alignment was not any of these various disappointments, but an unexpected, vulgar success. The emergence of OPEC has turned upside down all the social science literature on the third world, both Marxist and "free world." Even works as late as 1972 or 1973 now seem flawed or out of date. For OPEC, above all, made it respectable, even wildly desirable, to be a banana republic. After OPEC, who cared about nurturing a steel industry if you could form a cocoa cartel?

As many have pointed out, OPEC hit upon the basic principle of trade unionism and collective bargaining in its relationship with the industrialized countries. It proved that "weak" third world governments could deprive the industrialized countries of the power to manipulate raw materials. In other words, OPEC confounded the Marxist theory of "dependency," which held that such governments were unable to prevent the control of their economies from passing totally into foreign economic hands.

How it happened will remain a matter of sharp scholarly debate for years to come. Some blame it on Britain's withdrawal from the Persian Gulf, which removed the neo-colonial chill on collective action by the producers. Exponents of this view frequently argue for a strong US military presence in the Persian Gulf region, as James Schlesinger recently has done. Others blame it almost entirely on the refusal by the Seven Sisters to make common cause with Occidental Oil Company, an "independent," when its oil concession was threatened by Libya.

The deed was done, however, and the principle behind it applies (somewhat less effectively) to cocoa, coffee, copper, phosphate, and a dozen other commodities. At meetings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), third world countries with export potential trade pointers on cartel strategy. Today, neo-mercantilism is the heir to the gospel of the "third way." Money talks, and there is no shame in making it as a primary producer rather than as an industrialized power. Indeed, the US itself has become something of a banana republic, selling more grain to pay for its imported oil.

But this narrow type of producer unity, to the extent it can be achieved in markets other than oil, dispels forever the notion of some overall third world unity, especially on economic matters. It is not simply that cartels like OPEC prey as much on developing as on developed countries. Rather, the new bargaining power is available only to those third world countries with commodities to export. Industrialized countries also have large shares of these commodities in many cases. In the "New International Economic Order," the favorite slogan at UNCTAD conferences, there has emerged a "third world" of banana republics and a "fourth world" with no bananas.

Countries of the "fourth world," often with massive populations, like India or Pakistan, face disaster. Though they show remarkably little resentment, they are the worst victims of OPEC's success. Higher energy costs in agriculture may cause the "green revolution" to founder, and bring on catastrophe sooner rather than later.

Finally, OPEC's success raises the most unthinkable question of all in the third world political tradition: do you sincerely want to be rich? Mexico, for example, does not seem eager to be as instantly rich as the US would like to make it. Affluence is nice, but it does not necessarily resolve class and political tensions. Indeed, it seems likely to exacerbate them, as it did in Iran and appears to be doing in Saudi Arabia. Second, to everyone's surprise, it seems that money cannot buy everything, including industrial development (at least right away). Some OPEC countries are curbing their programs for development, and some are doubting whether they ever can establish a self-sustaining non-oil-based economy. They are giving up, or at least deferring, the dream of industrial development, restricting their oil output and raising their prices, and seeking to stretch out rather than maximize their revenues. The deferral of the dream is proving very costly to the West, and explains the arrival of the second energy crunch at a much earlier date than many experts had forecast.

The years have not been kind to the romantic concept of the "third world." The underdeveloped nations have split into various economic blocs, and everybody wants to make a deal. But the materialist goals of the development debate in Nehru's day now seem less attainable, and even sometimes vaguely undesirable. The recent Iranian experience suggests that the old idealism may recede in favor of an even older idealism which calls for root-and-branch purification. In disenchantment and despair, a new type of "non-alignment" may appear in the form of religious disdain for the worship of Mammon that still unites East and West, North and South.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Comedians

"Roman Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant spokesmen have joined in condemning as blasphemous a movie produced by the British satirical group known as Monty Python. . . . *Life of Brian*, an attempt to spoof the life of Christ, is the story of a contemporary of Jesus who is mistaken for the Messiah." (*New York Times*, September 4, 1979.) Wrong. He is mistaken for *a* messiah, in an age that is visibly hungry for messiahs and has many candidates. (Nothing like us, right?) What's more, Brian, whose last name is Cohen, continually denies that he is a messiah and, unlike Jesus, flees those who want to be his disciples. What's even more, the story of Jesus is kept quite separate, is glimpsed only twice, and is in itself never mocked. Brian is born in a manger across the way from the Holy Family's, and the Three Wise Men call at the wrong manger first, that's all. Our one glimpse of the right manger, from a distance, is pure Christmas-card. Later on, in 33 AD, Brian and his mother go to hear the Sermon on the Mount and are on the far edge of the crowd, where they misunderstand some of the words and get caught in a squabble that breaks out among some of the onlookers. I thought the incident was funny because it was possible, if not probable, and because it was a kind of retrospective forecast of just how much peace the Sermon has brought to mankind in the following centuries, particularly between Christians.

And what's even more, those religious spokesmen seem to me to be shortchanging Jesus himself, who demonstrably had a sense of humor, shown in wordplay. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." (Matthew, 16:18.) "And Jesus . . . saw two brethren . . . casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew, 4:18, 19.)

The many who (I hope) have seen Monty Python on PBS may suspect that they are at their best in short bursts. But in their feature film, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, they sustained their invention and insolence very well, and, with the help of witty anachronisms, they reamed the stupidities and cruelties of the Middle Ages, particularly those with contemporary resonances. They did not destroy the spiritual-intellectual legacy of the Middle Ages. (How could they, anyway, even if they'd wanted to?) In *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, they use the same invention-insolence-anachronism to ream the stupidities and delusions of religiosity. They will not destroy true, unpompous faith. (How could they, anyway, even if they wanted to?) If you like, you can read the script in a plentifully illustrated, oversize paperbound (Grosset and Dunlap; $9.95)—which also contains some additional sketches on the subject—and decide for yourself whether you want to see the picture. If you've stuck with this column so far, you'll probably want to see it. I read the script after seeing the film and doubled up all over again. My only objection to the film has nothing to do with any of the above: the dialogue is so fast, in ultra-English throwaway style, that I missed a bit from time to time, and (as the book shows) little of it is missable.

The screenplay was written by Python regulars, Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin, all of whom play numerous parts, including females; and it was directed by Jones. A layman's blessing on the lot of them. Even when I wasn't laughing, I was happy, which to me is a sign of really good comedy.

The story as such doesn't need summary: Brian keeps fleeing messiahdom, unsuccessfully, that's the core. At last he is brought before Pilate (who lisps on the letter 'r'). He is sentenced to be crucified along with that day's batch—no nails, just ropes. In the last shot there hangs Brian on a cross, surrounded by a dozen others on crosses, all trying to keep cheery. One by one they join in a song, kicking their legs in unison as far as they can. The film ends as they sing:

And always look on the bright side of life. . . .
(whistle)
Always look on the right side of life.
(whistle)

The camera pulls back and pans up into the sky.

If I had to pick a favorite moment, it would be the one in which Brian, escaping the idolatrous crowd, loses his right shoe. The crowd seizes his shoe as a sign and, through the fevers of iconography, they hold up right shoes thereafter as symbols of belief. It reminded me of H. G. Wells's remark that if Jesus had been hanged instead of crucified, the symbol of Christianity would be the noose.

With the exception of theater books, I don't know any field of publishing where writing and editing standards are as low as in film books. I don't mean those big picture books—*The Films of Snitz Edwards*, and so on—which at least are exactly what they seem to be: scrapbooks for buffs. I mean seemingly serious books from reputable publishers. Scribner's, for instance, one of the oldest American houses, now brings us (at $12.50) a biography called *Keaton: The Man Who Wouldn't Lie Down* by

Films Worth Seeing

Apocalypse Now. As moral epitome of Vietnam, flapdoodle. As spectacle, as visual rendition of the first psychedelic war, sensational.

Breaking Away. Class barriers in small-town America, plus adolescent fantasies. Bright dialogue lifts it above sitcom.

The Seduction of Joe Tynan. A corny armature (wife and professional woman vie for man's love), but the material—the political life of an ambitious young senator—is good.

Woyzeck. Klaus Kinski is too extraordinary for Büchner's pioneer Common Man maddened by his victimized life, still he grips. Werner Herzog directed with an eye for space and an ear for silence.

SK

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Tom Dardis. You may not be able to judge a book by its cover, but how about its subtitle?

If there is any figure in American film, in world film, who deserves a first-class biography, it's Buster Keaton. Of this superlative genius, there are two previous biographies in English: the autobiography, *My Wonderful World of Slapstick* (as told to Charles Samuels), an irritatingly patchy book, and the adoring, sentimental, inhibited *Keaton* by Rudi Blesh. Dardis has had access to much material that Blesh did not have or could not use, but Dardis is such a poor writer, so careless a researcher, and so critically vacuous that his book can be seen only as one to be superseded quickly.

On two aspects Dardis is helpful, if he can be trusted. (See below.) First, the financial history of Keaton's career. For instance, it's generally been believed that Keaton's independent studio was shipwrecked in 1928 when his business chief, Joe Schenck, abandoned him. Dardis shows that the last three independent productions, *The General*, *College*, and *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*, were all failures and that, in money terms, Keaton was lucky to get a well-paying contract at MGM. Second, Keaton's marital/sex life. His first marriage, to Natalie Talmadge, was weird. Shortly after the birth of Bobby, Keaton's second son, Natalie's two sisters, Norma and Constance, insisted that Natalie stop having sexual relations with Buster. Buster accepted this odd edict, reserving the right to philander. And Keaton's second wife, whom he married when he was on the alcohol-financial skids, apparently helped support him at times with prostitution.

But however good his materials, Dardis bungles the book with three kinds of defects. Some instances.

Prose. A man gives "a private dinner party." As against a public one? An actor can do a cigarette trick "in a matter of split seconds?" Not in a split second? "*Steamboat Bill, Jr.* can be described as a 'Tempest'-like review of many of Buster's favorite themes." I'm still chewing on that one. In one scene, says Dardis, Keaton is "shot sideways in full figure." I've stopped chewing on that.

Accuracy. Louis Wolheim was not German-born, as Dardis states, and Laura Hope Crews was not British. At the end of *City Lights* Chaplin does not "reveal his true identity to the girl"—she discovers it by herself, accidentally. Eddie Sutherland was not "Chaplin's co-director on *A Woman of Paris* and *The Gold Rush*"; he was assistant director on the first, had the same job on the second but quit when the picture was two-thirds done and got no credit. At that "private dinner party," of which there's an interesting photo in the book, Dardis says that the host, Joe Schenck has the smile "of a proud and happy ringmaster." Even with a magnifying glass, I couldn't find any smile at all. Wishes sometimes seem to father thoughts in this book.

Criticism. Just one sample. Dardis discusses the sequence in *The Cameraman* in which Keaton rescues the girl from drowning, leaves her on the beach for a moment to get something for her, and returns to see her walking off with his rival. She believes that it was the rival who saved her life. Buster sinks to his knees on the sand abjectly. What Dardis omits is that fact that the organ-grinder's monkey which figures in the film has been cranking Keaton's own camera the whole time, recording the truth of the matter. A monkey with a machine. All that Dardis has omitted is the point of the sequence and the theme of the picture.

Would Scribner's have published a biography as unsatisfactory as this in any other field? My impression is that many editors think: "Oh, well, it's only a film (or theater) book."

The aesthetics of accessibility.

Kurt Vonnegut and His Critics

by John Irving

More than 10 years ago, John Casey—the author of the novel *An American Romance* and the recent collection of stories, *Testimony and Demeanor*—interviewed Kurt Vonnegut for a magazine then published in West Branch, Iowa, and now defunct. In that interview Vonnegut said:

> *We must acknowledge that the reader is doing something quite difficult for him and the reason you don't change point of view too often is so he won't get lost and the reason you paragraph often is so that his eyes won't get tired, is so you get him without him knowing it by making his job easy for him. He has to re-stage your show in his head, costume and light it. His job is not easy.*

Neither is Vonnegut's. Making a reader's job easy is difficult work, although there's always been a great misunderstanding of Vonnegut on this point. In the *New York Review of Books*, for example, Jack Richardson called Vonnegut an "easy writer," and—among other charges—accused Vonnegut of not being Voltaire. And in the interview with Casey, Vonnegut tells the story of meeting Jason Epstein, the Random House editor—whom Vonnegut calls "a terribly powerful cultural commissar"—at a cocktail party. When they were introduced, Epstein thought a minute, then said, "Science fiction," turned and walked off. "He just had to place me, that's all," Vonnegut said. Other "cultural commissars" have been trying to "place" Vonnegut for years; more often, like Richardson, they tell us what Vonnegut is *not*. If he's not Voltaire, for example, it's possible he's not Swift, either. At least in part, I think, it is the childlike availability of his prose, its fast and easy-to-read surfaces, that seems to be so troublesome to Vonnegut's critics.

The assumption that what is easy to read has been easy to write is a forgivable lapse among non-writers, but it is self-incriminating how many critics, who also (in a fashion) write themselves, have called Vonnegut "easy." In one of the worst broadsides ever published on Vonnegut (in the *New York Times Book Review*, in the disguise of a review of *Slapstick*), Roger Sale seemed especially upset with Vonnegut's audience—the "minimally intelligent young," he called them. "I think I would be less bothered by Vonnegut were it not that one of my major tasks is to try to pose hard questions for the semi-literate young," says the long-suffering Mr. Sale, slaving in the trenches of ignorance. There is something self-serving in this criticism; these are the remarks of a critic who

John Irving's most recent novel, his fourth, is *The World According to Garp* (E.P. Dutton).

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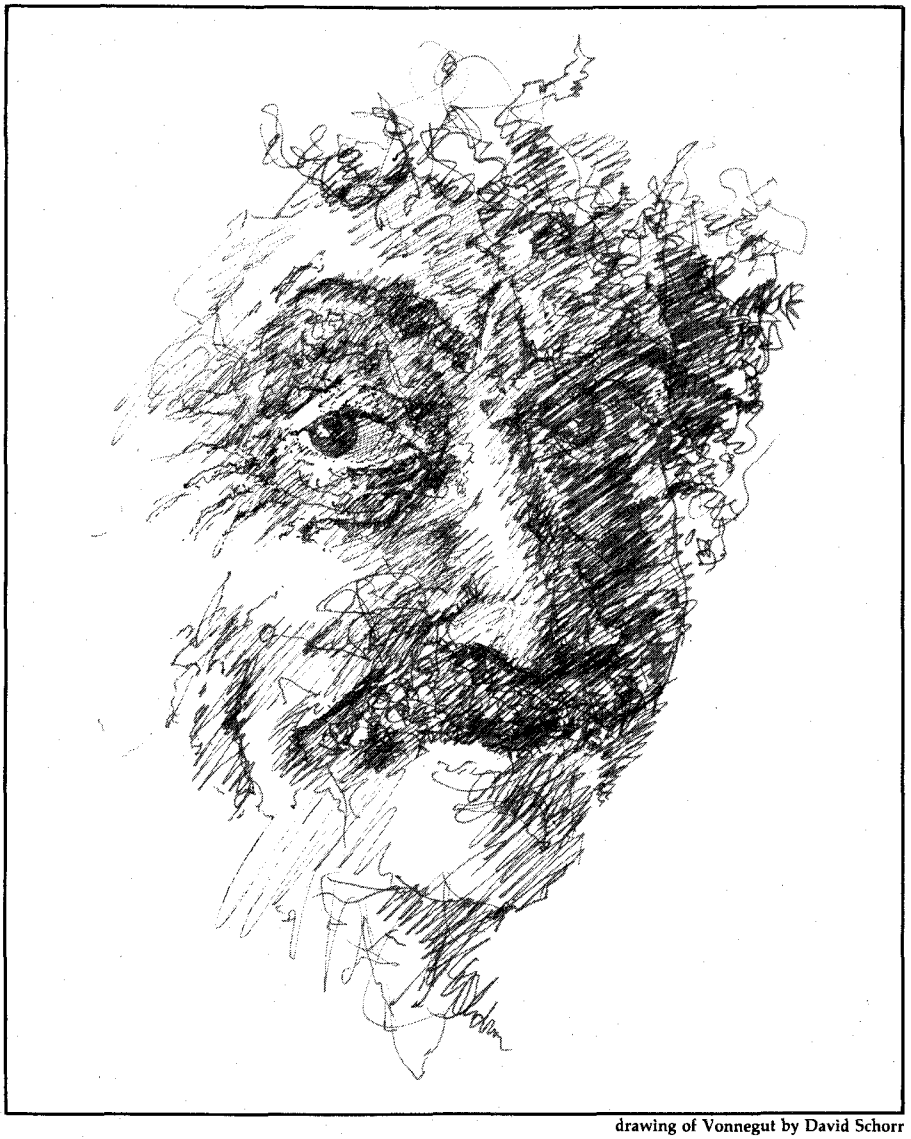
wants a work to need him—to explain it to us, perhaps. "Nothing could be easier," Sale assures us about Vonnegut's writing. On the other hand, Sale tells us, "it takes stamina, determination and crazy intelligence" to read Thomas Pynchon. More self-congratulation—Sale is not an easy reader, we have to give him that. And despite Sale's invitation to comparison, it is not my desire to knock Thomas Pynchon, a writer as serious about his work as Mr. Vonnegut is about his; I would say, however, that there are many "serious people who take fiction seriously" (as Sale calls us) who think that Pynchon's kind of writing is the easiest to write. And the hardest to read: a struggle with ideas and language where we, the readers, provide much of the struggle; where the writer, perhaps, has not struggled hard enough to make himself more readable.

Why is "readable" such a bad thing to be these days? Some "serious people" I know are gratified by the struggle to make sense of what they read; as Vonnegut says, "So it goes." Let them be gratified. As someone who, like Roger Sale, has struggled many hard hours with the "semi-literate young," I am more often gratified by a writer who has accepted the enormous effort necessary to make writing clear. Vonnegut's lucidity is hard and brave work in a literary world where pure messiness is frequently thought to be a sign of some essential wrestling with the "hard questions." Good writers have always shown that hard questions must also be posed and answered cleanly and well. It is as if Roger Sale—and he's hardly alone; I use him as an example of many—is championing a literature for second-year graduate students, a literature dependent on interpretation; and, of course, in our shameful semi-literacy, perhaps we will need to call upon the "crazy intelligence" of someone like Mr. Sale to interpret it for us.

Mr. Sale tells us he'd be surprised if Robert Scholes, "who once expressed fondness for Vonnegut," likes Vonnegut now as much as he once did. I would be astonished if Mr. Scholes didn't feel all the more convinced of his earlier appraisal. Writing about *Slaughterhouse-Five* in the *New York Times* Mr. Scholes offered gentle chiding to those, like Roger Sale, who find Vonnegut difficult to accept as serious. Scholes pointed out that Vonnegut's critics too often confuse muddled earnestness with profundity—that is, if you *sound* serious, you must be. Indeed,



drawing of Vonnegut by David Schorr

Sale seems to be telling us that if the work is tortured and a ghastly effort to read, it must be serious; or, as Sale tells us in the case of Joseph Heller's *Something Happened*, another valuable way to judge a book's seriousness is to note how many years it took to write. (Mr. Heller is a serious and good writer, but not for the years between his books.) Roger Sale's logic leads to this: if the work is lucid and sharp and the narrative flows like water, we should suspect the work of being simplistic, and as light and as lacking in seriousness as fluff. This is simplistic criticism, of course; it is easy criticism, too.

There is no shortage of this kind of criticism around; Vonnegut is a frequent victim of it. No fewer than five graduate students I have taught over the past 11 years have delighted in showing me this polemic of John Middleton Murry's (as if they'd made a rare discovery): "Criticism should be less timid; it should openly accept the fact that its final judgments are moral." No kidding; but all the more reason, then, that those judgments should be careful. We should judge writers for what they've done, and what they mean—not for their audience or their press (or for their lack of either). Another popular person to quote—in the environs of no fewer than four English departments I've been associated with—is Cyril Connolly. "Never praise. Praise dates you." Maybe; but not as much as remarks like Epstein's "science fiction" and Richardson's "easy writer" date *them*.

"It is the duty of critics," Alvin Rosenfeld writes in the *Southern Review*,

> *to make a good poet's work harder for him to perform, for it is only in the overcoming of genuine difficulties that strong poetry emerges. A corollary of this view . . . is that a critic should do his work in such a way as to make a* reader's *work also more difficult for him to perform, and for much the same reasons, namely, to achieve interpretations strenuous enough to be adequate to the age.*

It may seem inexact to respond to that as I do, but what a lot of crap that is! For *whom* is this difficulty satisfying? Good

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writers have always been more than "adequate to the age"; in fact, they have always had to fight against how boring, and limiting, the mere adequacies of their age are to them.

When asked—in *Playboy*, in 1973—why he thought his books were so popular with so many younger people (those "semi-literates" Roger Sale has warned us of), Vonnegut said:

> *I certainly don't go after the youth market or anything like that. I didn't have my fingers on any pulse; I was simply writing. Maybe it's because I deal with sophomoric questions that full adults regard as settled. I talk about what God is like, what could He want, is there a heaven, and, if there is, what would it be like? This is what college sophomores are into; these are the questions they enjoy having discussed. And more mature people find these subjects very tiresome, as though they're settled.*

That is lovely, that ". . . as though they're settled." It is those "full adults" who perform most of the imaginative acts of stupidity that lead to such destruction in so many of Vonnegut's works. Easy to read though he is, he is not easy to *take*.

In his introduction to the work of Céline, Vonnegut writes:

> *He was in the worst possible taste, by which I mean that he had many educational advantages, becoming a physician, and he was widely traveled in Europe and Africa and North America—and yet he wrote not a single phrase that hinted to similarly advantaged persons that he was something of a gentleman.*
>
> *He did not seem to understand that aristocratic restraints and sensibilities, whether inherited or learned, accounted for much of the splendor of literature. In my opinion, he discovered a higher and more awful order of literary truth by ignoring the crippled vocabularies of ladies and gentlemen and by using, instead, the more comprehensive language of shrewd and tormented guttersnipes.*
>
> *Every writer is in his debt, and so is anyone else interested in discussing lives in their entirety. By being so impolite, he demonstrated that perhaps half of all experience, the animal half, had been concealed by good manners. No honest writer or speaker will ever want to be polite again.*

Of course "the more comprehensive language of shrewd and tormented guttersnipes" is the language Vonnegut also loves and uses so well. "My motives are political," he admits in the *Playboy* interview.

> *I agree with Stalin and Hitler and Mussolini that the writer should serve his society. I differ with dictators as to how writers should serve. Mainly, I think they should be—and biologically have to be—agents of change. For the better, we hope. Writers are specialized cells in the social organism. They are evolutionary cells. Mankind is trying to become something else; it's experimenting with new ideas all the time. And writers are the means of introducing new ideas into the society, and also a means of responding symbolically to life.*

Vonnegut admits that he couldn't survive his own pessimism if he didn't have "some kind of sunny little dream." His work is full of those dreams—"harmless untruths," he has called them (in *Cat's Cradle*). Religions, charitable organizations, world planners, utopian schemers, absent-minded inventors bent on change, do-gooders atoning for terrible crimes (or accidents), lovable and not-so-lovable men of power and men of money; they all fail, they all bungle the job of improving the species in usually funny and well-meaning ways. "The biggest laughs," Vonnegut has said, "are based on the biggest disappointments and the biggest fears." It's nothing that new; Freud, as Vonnegut likes to point out, has already written about gallows humor. "It's people laughing in the middle of political helplessness," Vonnegut says. "I have customarily written about powerless people who felt there wasn't much they could do about their situations."

"It goes against the American storytelling grain," Vonnegut says,

> *to have someone in a situation he can't get out of, but I think this is very usual in life. There are people, particularly dumb people, who are in terrible trouble and never get out of it, because they're not intelligent enough. And it strikes me as gruesome and comical that in our culture we have an expectation that a man can always solve his problems. There is that implication that if you just have a little more energy, a little more fight, the problem can always be solved. This is so untrue that it makes me want to cry—or laugh.*

He points out that the science-fiction passages in *Slaughterhouse-Five* are

> *just like the clowns in Shakespeare. When Shakespeare figured the audience had had enough of the heavy stuff, he'd let up a little, bring on a clown or a foolish innkeeper or something like that, before he'd become serious again. And trips to other planets, science fiction of an obviously kidding sort, is equivalent to bringing on the clowns every so often to lighten things up.*

In fact, Vonnegut even *speaks* lucidly about his own work—a subject even lucid writers can be clumsy about. It's remarkable, considering how clear he's been, to consider how badly understood he is. But listen to this: "A good critic," according to Jacob Glatstein, "is armed for war. And criticism is a war, against a work of art—either the critic defeats the work or the work defeats the critic." Well, with that kind of demand put on the critic, I guess it's always possible to misunderstand *anything*.

Vonnegut is not Shakespeare, either, of course, but in that fun field—of trying to prove who Vonnegut is *not*—Shakespeare comes closer than some others. They both feel that art and entertainment are not uncomfortably married; indeed, they feel that art ought to be entertaining. But this idea is not in literary vogue. William Gass—the eloquent philosopher whose good language and clear thinking are marvels to me—noted recently what he thinks happens to "almost any writer who has gained some popularity. That popularity," according to Gass, "is almost invariably based on what is weakest in the writer's work, and then the tendency is for the writer to lean in the direction of that quality which encourages the weakness rather than counteracting it." A puzzling notion: would a lack of popularity assure a writer that he has no weaknesses? And knowing that most serious writers have always seen themselves as speaking to a deaf world (Vonnegut included), isn't it odd to assume that a writer—once popular—would indulge his so-called weakness by writing to an audience? A writer always mistrusts his audience, whether he is conning them or seducing them or ignoring them (and indulging himself); I think a writer especially mistrusts his audience when he discovers that he has one. Gass's theory is intellectually interesting, but it makes him sound like a poor judge of human nature—more particularly, writers' natures—which I'm sure he isn't. His idea, though, is connected to his misgivings about entertainment and art. "Even people of considerable intelligence are not interested in literature per se," Gass has said. "They want things that are fundamentally not

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upsetting. They want entertainment." A bad word, for Gass—"entertainment." (Perhaps it's like "readable.") And yes, and no—people do want entertainment, certainly; but I think they also want things that are fundamentally upsetting, which—easy or hard to read—good literature usually is. Catharsis—perhaps it is also an unpopular word today, or at least an old-fashioned one—relies on upsetting readers. You purge fear through evoking it, you purify pain by rendering it, you bathe the heart with tears. Vonnegut can hurt you, and he does; he means to, too. When the sunny dreams and the harmless untruths evaporate—and they always do—a ruined planet is what we look upon; his books make us wish we were better. That's a moral harshness Conrad and Dickens surely share with him; Dickens, by the way, was also an entertainer. Vonnegut may not make us weep for little Nell; there are no little Nells, or other characters of her kind, in his spare books. In his books we weep, instead, for *us*. Which reminds me of what Vonnegut said more than 10 years ago, about what you do to a reader . . . "you get him without him knowing it by making his job easy for him." Like the pharmacist who really knows what's good for you: he understands the sugar coating on some very bitter pills. So many of Vonnegut's critics have noticed only the coating—or the pills: his bleak impoliteness (as he would say of Céline). It is in the combination of such dreaming and such reality, in his work, where his ambition is both large and realized.

One of Vonnegut's critics has at least tried harder than some others, and this is John Gardner—although Vonnegut, and nearly everyone else, is mowed down by Gardner's religious crusade to make literature optimistic again. "He's making a shrill pitch to the literary right wing that wants to repudiate all of modernism and jump back in the arms of their 19th-century literary grandfathers," John Barth accuses Gardner; that's fair to say. But Gardner's "morality," *his* political motives for writing—for improving the world—are not unlike Vonnegut's own aims, and Gardner sees some of what Vonnegut is doing more clearly than most. Vonnegut's "problem," as Gardner sees it, is that "he's overcritical of himself, endlessly censoring, endlessly reconsidering his moral affirmations." That's a "problem" more writers should have, I think. Gardner goes on to say that this "would explain the seeming cold-heartedness and trivial-mindedness of his famous comment on the American fire-bombing of Dresden, 'So it goes,' a desperate, perhaps overcensored attitude mindlessly echoed by the turned-off and cynical." And here Gardner falls into the old sin of accusing a writer for the audience he keeps. Even so, Gardner is wise to point out that "Vonnegut's cynical disciples read him wrong." He adds: "It is Vonnegut himself who points out the vast and systematic modern evils that he then appears to shrug off or, for some reason, blame on God. But the misreading is natural. Vonnegut's moral energy," Gardner calls it, "is forever flagging, his fight forever turning slapstick." Yes, but slapstick is Vonnegut's response to despair; Gardner doesn't approve of despair. John Updike (who has been especially wise about Vonnegut) has said of Gardner: "Morality in fiction is accuracy and truth. The world has changed, and in a sense we are all heirs to despair.

IN A CONVALESCENT HOSPITAL

I say, Lord, let her go.
Her flesh has melted underneath her skin;
The skin is bleached like leaves after the weight of snow,
Slow winter month on month, mottled and shrunk,
And lined with swollen veins; her lips
Are fallen in upon her gums; and her white hair,
Grown thin as mist, lets show her skull.
Only her eyes are dark and bright,
And in a moment of full recognition, catch my gaze,
Full of surprise that I have come
Out of a day long passed to bring my love.

I was a child and she was full of beauty,
Her long dark hair forever slipping from its combs.
By the low fire she laughed, and caught the coil,
And lifted it, still laughing, to her head,
And pinned it there;
The while my mother, smiling, chatted on,
Above the flutter of the little flames.

So well she sang! So patiently
From my embarrassed throat she coaxed a sound
Small credit to her patience. Still, she glowed,
Her eyes on mine, while her lips trembled
With the growing note
That from her own throat brightened, swelled,
And rounded, and grew dim. All this
To teach a troubled child to sing.

Now she speaks hurriedly,
In sudden panic clutching at my hand. Oh,
Let me out of here! Where am I! Here?
I don't belong here. Let me go!
And I? What can I say? Lord, let her go?
Yet who am I to say, Lord, let her go?

Why is she here, and why
Am I here with her to remember joy?
What can I know
Of gentleness engendered by her need,
Of charity bestowed
By those who never saw her young?
They come and go, in rounds impersonal, prescribed,
Sometimes unheeding, sometimes more than kind.
I take this moment for its preciousness,
In grief for her, for me, and pray it bless
Both her and me.

Janet Lewis

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Better to face this and tell the truth, however dismal, than to do whatever life-enhancing thing [Gardner is] proposing." Gardner, speaking morally, says that Vonnegut "sighs, grins, and sidles away. He's most himself when . . . he's most openly warm-hearted and comic," Gardner complains. "His lack of commitment—ultimately a lack of concern about his characters—makes his writing slight." But what Gardner calls "slight"—or worse, "a lack of concern"—is really the haunted soul of Vonnegut's vision itself: Vonnegut sees little light at the end of the tunnel, though he keeps looking; Gardner wants him to come up with more light. It is Gardner's aesthetic, not necessarily Vonnegut's, that "art is essentially and primarily moral—that is, life-giving—moral in its process of creation and moral in what it says." Well, Vonnegut *is* a do-gooder, but none of us, according to Gardner, is do-gooding enough.

It surprises me only because—for other, wiser things Gardner has written—I would expect him to like Vonnegut more than he likes anybody else. "Dullness is the chief enemy of art," Gardner writes, "each generation of artists must find new ways of slicing the fat off reality." And Vonnegut does that so well—his novels are *skeletons* of people and events, lit up in such a bare, hard light that we can't fail to recognize all our evils and hopes—lovingly carried to human extremes. "By its nature," Gardner also writes,

> *criticism makes art sound more intellectual than it is—more calculated and systematic. . . . The best critical intelligence, capable of making connections the artist himself may be blind to, is a noble thing in its place; but applied to the making of art, cool intellect is likely to produce superficial work, either art which is all sensation or art which is all thought. We see this whenever we find art too obviously constructed to fit a theory, as in the music of John Cage or in the recent fiction of William Gass.*

I think it is fair to make such a generalization, but there can be no accusing Vonnegut of that kind of playing around. He can't be accused of another kind of playing around that Gardner wonderfully describes, either. "The trivial has its place," Gardner writes. He adds,

> *I can think of no good reason that some people should not specialize in the behavior of the left-side hairs on an elephant's trunk. Even at its best, its most deadly serious, criticism, like art, is partly a game, as all good critics know. My objection is not to the game but to the fact that contemporary critics have for the most part lost track of the point of their game, just as artists, by and large, have lost track of the point of theirs. Fiddling with the hairs on an elephant's nose is indecent when the elephant happens to be standing on the baby.*

But Vonnegut is always concerned for the baby, he is no fiddler with the hairs—or even with the elephant. I would think Gardner would like him for that. Vonnegut's novels have been about—roughly—the destruction of human individuality by the team-sports mentality of corporations and the technological age; the origins of our universe, and the proof that there is no life after death; the viciousness of political propaganda and the definition of "war criminal"; the end of the world, through technological playfulness and crack-pot morality; the problems of the rich having so much money, and getting richer, and the poor growing poorer, and also more stupid; more war crimes; the problems of making it, whatever "it" is, when you're too old to enjoy it—whatever "it" is; and another end of the world. In fact, it's the end of the world, again and again, with him. That's a pretty big baby; that's not fiddling with the hairs on an elephant's nose. Vonnegut would surely find that "indecent."

I intend (obviously) to praise him; he is among living writers—together with John Hawkes and Günter Grass—the most stubbornly imaginative. He is not anybody else, or even a version of anybody else, and he is a writer with a cause. He likes to refer to our potential to belong to "artificial extended families," and he intends to keep trying to make us belong—in spite of ourselves. He is unique and wise, graceful and kind, and he can fool you by how "easy" he is to read—if you don't *think* carefully. In the prologue to *Slapstick* he wrote—of his brother Bernard, a scientist, and himself—

> *Because of the sorts of minds we were given at birth, and in spite of their disorderliness, Bernard and I belong to artificial extended families which allow us to claim relatives all over the world.*
>
> *He is a brother to scientists everywhere. I am a brother to writers everywhere.*
>
> *This is amusing and comforting to both of us. It is nice.*
>
> *It is lucky, too, for human beings need all*

KURT VONNEGUT

His new novel is a stunning vision of America—the saga of Walter F. Starbuck, who, at the rueful age of 66, looks back at his past life as Harvard man, ex-communist, New Deal bureaucrat, congressional committee finger man (à la Whittaker Chambers), Watergate conspirator and lover of four women. Revealing everything from the secret of the world's richest shopping bag lady to the last words of Caryl Chessman, JAILBIRD is "vintage Vonnegut—a delightful and sardonic rumination on the history of our times."—Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

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HER LOVER SPEAKS

What I told you once
is no longer true. What I
say now may not be true long.
Let white birds of truth,
as they flit from branch to branch,
sing—before they peck your eyes.

Linda Pastan

the relatives they can get—as possible donors or receivers not necessarily of love, but of common decency.

As a cause—not to mention a literary theme—"common decency" is worth praising. I do not fear being "dated" for it. As John Middleton Murry also wrote, "The critic should not be cheap," and I would add that there are times when praise is more difficult and worthy to articulate than scorn. As Thomas Mann said:

We all bear wounds; praise is a soothing if not necessarily healing balm for them. Nevertheless, if I may judge by my own experience, our receptivity for praise stands in no relationship to our vulnerability to mean disdain and spiteful abuse. No matter how stupid such abuse is, no matter how plainly impelled by private rancors, as an expression of hostility it occupies us far more deeply and lastingly than the opposite. Which is very foolish, since enemies are, of course, the necessary concomitant of any robust life, the very proof of its strength.

Kurt Vonnegut certainly has enemies. Not only because of them, but because of the constancy of his light-dark work, he is our strongest writer. Now he gives us *Jailbird* (Delacorte; $9.95), his ninth novel.

* * *

Kilgore Trout, the science-fiction genius, is back. "He could not make it on the outside," Vonnegut writes. "It is no disgrace. A lot of good people can't make it on the outside. I think it's a wonder that I have." Kilgore Trout is in jail, it turns out. In *Jailbird* we learn that Trout has all along been just one of the pseudonyms of Dr. Robert Fender, "a veterinarian and the only American to have been convicted of treason during the Korean War." He fell in love with a North Korean and tried to hide her, and now he is the supply clerk and a lifer in a Federal Minimum Security Adult Correctional Facility in Georgia; in the supply room, he plays Edith Piaf records all day long—he is especially fond of her song, "Non, Je ne Regrette Rien." Or: "No, I am not sorry about anything."

Fender, or Trout as he often does in Vonnegut books, tells us stories about beings from other planets. Under the pseudonym of Frank X. Barlow, he tells us about the planet Vicuna. An escaped judge explains that the "people" on his planet had the same word for "hello" and "good-bye" and "please" and "thank you." The word was "ting-a-ling." The judge tells us that "back on Vicuna the people could don and doff their bodies as easily as Earthlings could change their clothing. When they were outside their bodies, they were weightless, transparent, silent awarenesses and sensibilities." The judge, in fact, has come to earth looking for a body to occupy; he makes an awful mistake concerning the body of his choice; he chooses a wasted old man, a fellow prisoner of Kilgore Trout's—and the hero of *Jailbird*—Walter F. Starbuck, a Watergate criminal and formerly President Richard M. Nixon's special adviser on youth affairs (a position so little valued by Nixon that Starbuck works in a basement office without windows and never has a secretary). But before the judge makes the mistake of occupying Walter F. Starbuck's body, we hear about what happened on the planet Vicuna.

"They ran out of time," the judge says.

The tragedy of the planet was that its scientists found ways to extract time from topsoil and the oceans and the atmosphere—to heat their homes and power their speedboats and fertilize their crops with it; to eat it; to make clothes out of it; and so on. They served time at every meal, fed it to household pets, just to demonstrate how rich and clever they were. They allowed great gobbets of it to putrefy to oblivion in their overflowing garbage cans.

'On Vicuna,' says the judge, 'we lived as though there were no tomorrow.'

The patriotic bonfires of time were the worst, he says. When he was an infant, his parents held him up to coo and gurgle with delight as a million years of future were put to the torch in honor of the birthday of the queen. But by the time he was fifty, only a few weeks of future remained. Great rips in reality were appearing everywhere. People could walk through walls. His own speedboat became nothing more than a steering wheel. Holes appeared in vacant lots where children were playing, and the children fell in.

So all the Vicunians had to get out of their bodies and sail into space without further ado. 'Ting-a-ling,' they said to Vicuna.

"Ting-a-ling" is one of nearly a dozen jangling refrains in this novel. When Walter F. Starbuck has served his Watergate term, and has had another run for the money "on the outside," he is found to be a criminal again—"and on and on," as Vonnegut says. "I am a recidivist," Starbuck says at the end, defining the word as describing a person who habitually relapses into crime or antisocial behavior. He receives a telegram from good old Kilgore Trout, the lifer—sent as a kind of welcome home card before Starbuck returns to the slammer. "Ting-a-ling," the telegram says.

Other refrains in *Jailbird* are: "Nobody home," "Live and learn," "Small world," "Imagine that," "Peace," "Times change" and "Time flies." My favorite is "Strong stuff," because the book *is* such strong stuff, and Vonnegut's ability to freshen the clichés in our language by using them when we're most vulnerable to the truth in them has never been sharper.

Another, larger "cliché" he employs in a startlingly vulnerable way is the Sermon on the Mount. That's the one about the poor in spirit receiving the Kingdom of Heaven, about the meek inheriting the earth; those hungering for righteousness actually find it, and the merciful are treated mercifully; the pure in heart get to see God, and the peacemakers are called the sons of God; "and on and on." Walter F. Starbuck is an idealist; he suffers from a disease described by Vonnegut as long ago as *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965), for Eliot Rosewater also suffers it—"it attacks those exceedingly rare individuals who reach biological maturity still loving and wanting to help their fellow men." Starbuck's idealism does not even die in the Nixon White House, it does not die in prison, or even when he becomes—before his final arrest—a vice president of the Down Home Records Division of The RAMJAC Corporation. RAMJAC, at the time of Starbuck's employment there, owns quite a lot of things, McDonald's and the *New York Times* among them. In fact, Walter F. Starbuck's son, who hates him—and who is a most unpleasant person—is a book reviewer for the *Times*; "imagine that." Yet Walter F. Starbuck says that he *still* believes "that peace and plenty and happiness can be worked out some way." He also admits, "I am a fool." Of his years in the Nixon White House, as the president's special adviser on youth affairs, even Starbuck is forced to conclude that he might have sent the same telegram each week "to limbo,"

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instead of compiling his countless memos to the president. Here is the telegram: "YOUNG PEOPLE STILL REFUSE TO SEE THE OBVIOUS IMPOSSIBILITY OF WORLD DISARMAMENT AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY. COULD BE FAULT OF NEW TESTAMENT."

There seems to be little, on the surface, that Vonnegut refuses to see; at least he tries to see the possibilities for human improvement. But he misleads us, as we *are* misled—by our own optimism, our own idealism, our own good intentions, all along.

In the opening of *Slaughterhouse-Five* he admits that writing an antiwar book is like writing an anti-glacier book; then he tries to write one anyway. The war happens just the same. He calls *Slaughterhouse-Five* a failure—"and had to be," he writes "since it was written by a pillar of salt." He says he loves Lot's wife for looking back at the fire and brimstone, when God told her not to look back, "because it was so human." He concludes: "People aren't supposed to look back." *Jailbird*, and almost every Vonnegut novel, has its pillar-of-salt person.

Walter F. Starbuck is the son of immigrant hired help, but his benefactor—Alexander Hamilton McCone, the man who sends young Starbuck to Harvard and advises him on how to conduct himself—is a multimillionaire pillar of salt. McCone witnesses his family's bridge and iron company of Cleveland under the siege of a pre-union strike; Vonnegut's invention, called the Cuyahoga Massacre, takes place in the 1890s, and the young McCone is so traumatized by the shooting of several striking workers, their women and children, by Pinkerton marksmen, that he develops a crippling stammer, drops out of factory life and becomes a reclusive donor to the arts. There is often a crippled rich man in a Vonnegut book, and Vonnegut always has recognized the safety of the arts. *Jailbird* is his most socially demonstrative novel.

Sacco and Vanzetti, whose story is retold in Vonnegut's voice, are the real-life heroes of the book. Walter F. Starbuck has his ideals in the right place, but his heart, as an ex-girlfriend points out to him, just isn't in the workers' revolution. "It's all right," she tries to reassure him (her dying words). "You couldn't help it that you were born without a heart. At least you tried to believe what the people with hearts believed—so you were a good man just the same." Strong stuff, but the common man and economic equality—forms of a humane socialism—have long been a part of Vonnegut's overall plea for human dignity and common decency. In the end, though, even these are usually stripped away. "You know what is finally going to kill this planet?" Starbuck tries to tell his friends at his farewell party before returning to jail. "A total lack of seriousness," he says. "Nobody gives a damn anymore about what's really going on, what's going to happen next, or how we ever got into such a mess in the first place." But his friends are all "full adults" and can only, of course, find this hysterically funny; they crack up with laughter over it. They all tell each other jokes. In fact, the most touching relationship in the novel—that Starbuck has with a girl he loved but never made love to, a girl who jilts him and marries his best friend—is a relationship based on telling jokes, sometimes long-distance (over the phone). She works in a hospital and is especially eager to tell jokes on the days when she loses the most patients.

"I gave up on saying anything serious," Starbuck tells us at the end and sits back to listen to a tape of his last remarks to Congressman Nixon, when Nixon asks him why, "as the son of immigrants who had been treated so well by Americans, as a man who had been treated like a son and been sent to Harvard by an American capitalist," *why* had he been "so ungrateful to the American economic system"? He was a Communist, in his younger days—that's all Nixon means; Starbuck's answer, as he admits, is not very original. His answer to Nixon is: "Why? The Sermon on the Mount, sir."

It's a weak answer, but Vonnegut's wisdom is such that he won't insult our intelligence with anything pretentious or—frankly—unlikely; he won't make a grander claim. His heroes slump at the endings, they drag their heels—and they all start out running so hard, meaning so well. Finally, at their best, all they can do is try to be kind; they forgive whomever is around to be forgiven, but their pessimism is extreme.

Starbuck's dog is experiencing a false pregnancy. She believes that a rubber ice-cream cone with a squeaker in it is her puppy. "She carries it up and down the stairs of my duplex," Starbuck tells us.

She is even secreting milk for it. She is getting shots to make her stop doing that.

I observe how profoundly serious Nature has made her about a rubber ice-cream cone—

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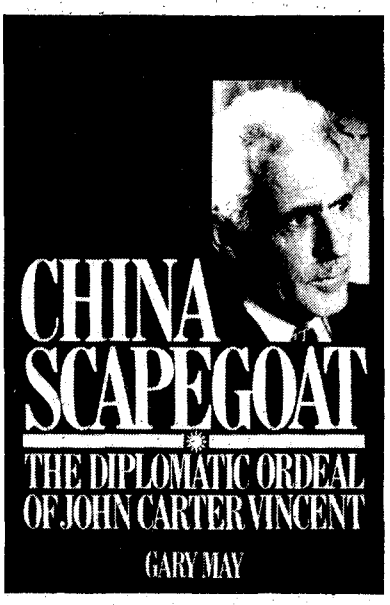

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brown rubber cone, pink rubber ice cream. I have to wonder what equally ridiculous commitments to bits of trash I myself have made. Not that it matters at all. We are here for no purpose, unless we can invent one. Of that I am sure. The human condition in an exploding universe would not have been altered one iota if, rather than live as I have, I had done nothing but carry a rubber ice-cream cone from closet to closet for sixty years.

Dr. Robert Fender, alias Kilgore Trout, in prison for life, writes a "story about a planet where the worst crime was ingratitude. People were executed all the time for being ungrateful." The immigrants Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty of ingratitude, too, of course. Who seems more ungrateful to us than anarchists? Especially "foreign" anarchists. Kilgore Trout was writing, as he is always writing, about *our* planet. May he live—even in prison—in peace!

The committeemen named by the state (of Massachusetts) to advise us what to do with Sacco and Vanzetti were two college presidents (from Harvard and MIT) and a retired probate judge. Despite the advice of Albert Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, Sinclair Lewis, and H. G. Wells, among others, this triumvirate declared that in the electrocution of Sacco and Vanzetti justice would be served. "So much for the wisdom of even the wisest human beings," Walter F. Starbuck says. "And I am now compelled to wonder if wisdom has ever existed or can ever exist. Might wisdom be as impossible in this particular universe as a perpetual-motion machine?"

Earlier, Starbuck cries out in warning: "What a book this is for tears!" Oh yes; and he admits to still further embarrassment. "The most embarrassing thing to me about this autobiography, surely, is its unbroken chain of proofs that I was never a serious man. I have been in a lot of trouble over the years, but that was all accidental. Never have I risked my life, or even my comfort, in the service of mankind. Shame on me." And so Vonnegut shames us all.

Of course, not many of us will feel compelled to action. Some of us might merely wish we were better. Neither response is a typical response to nihilism, which has been the easiest criticism of Vonnegut of all. If something is more pessimistic than you think it should be, call it nihilism. If I had to call what Vonnegut does any one thing, I would opt for something like "responsible soap opera"—"soap opera" being a good thing to write, in my opinion; it is only bad art that has given soap opera a bad name. Good soap opera simply means writing about people as if the people were important; "responsible" soap opera means representing people as people really are. "Nowhere in the world was this sort of theater being done anymore," Walter Starbuck writes of the soap opera of his own life. "For what it may be worth to modern impresarios: I can testify from personal experience that great crowds can still be gathered by melodrama."

Starbuck's real crime—not his Watergate crime, which is an accident, and not the crime that ends the book, for which he is again imprisoned (it being a crime of mild heroism)—is that he "told a fragmentary truth which has now been allowed to represent the whole." He is "yet another nincompoop, who, by being at the wrong place at the wrong time was able to set humanitarianism back a full century." A harsh charge, but a usual one—in the best of Vonnegut's work. In Starbuck's words: "Much talk about human suffering and what could be done about it—and then infantile silliness for relief." Strong stuff.

I am reminded of Eliot Rosewater's heroizing of Kilgore Trout, long ago. "The Hell with the talented sparrow-farts who write delicately of one small piece of one mere lifetime," Eliot boozily crows, "when the issues are galaxies, eons, and trillions of souls yet to be born." Vonnegut does have a way of making me feel that the accomplishments of his contemporaries are somehow less—though this, I know, he would be the first to deny. As Vonnegut says, of old Senator Rosewater's view of Kilgore Trout: "The Senator admired Trout as a rascal who could rationalize anything, not understanding that Trout had never tried to tell anything but the truth." And the truth, as we say, can hurt.

If someone hurts us more than we think is fair, perhaps we feel better if we dismiss that person by calling him a "nihilist." To say so to Vonnegut is to be tone-deaf, for in his tone of voice is always a plea for human kindness, for common decency. He has always been more than a satirist.

He is also such an artist at the structure of a novel, we could satisfy ourselves by praising him for that alone. His plots—especially in *Jailbird*—would have made Dickens glow; it takes away from his surprises to reveal the story of *Jailbird* in that way. It is wonderfully Dickensian, intricate and risky, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is even an epilogue. There is always a kind of epilogue in Vonnegut because he sees things, as many writers can't, in their entirety. The epilogue in *Jailbird* begins: "There was more. There is always more." And we are prepared for it throughout because of his deliberate foreshadowing: every character is introduced with a mini-history, and of many we are told, from the first meeting, what *would* become of them. There is also a prologue, where Vonnegut neatly fuses the most trivial autobiography with the most daring inventions, and shows us how they belong together. In this he includes an assessment of his own work, sent him by a high school student from Indiana. The student states that a single idea lies at the core of Vonnegut's work so far. "Love may fail, but courtesy will prevail." Vonnegut says that this sounds true and complete to him, but he has always been modest. "Our language is much larger than it needs to be," he writes: a hard truth many writers are pained to discover. And I have to admit that the Indiana high school student is certainly closer to understanding Vonnegut than are several of his most outspoken critics.

Jailbird is Vonnegut's best book since *Slaughterhouse-Five*; it is the equal of that book, and the equal of *Sirens of Titan*, *Rosewater*, *Mother Night*, and *Cat's Cradle*, too. It is vintage Vonnegut. "What a book this is for tears!" Indeed. Its last word—with a proper chill, and a proper sadness—is "Good-bye."

* * *

Remember Salinger's Glass family? In the heart of *Seymour: An Introduction*, Seymour, a writer, is arguing with his brother Buddy, also a writer, about why it's necessary to believe in a kind of aesthetics of accessibility; Seymour always thinks of the old librarian of his childhood, a Miss Overman, whenever he judges his own work. "He said he felt he owed Miss Overman a painstaking, sustained search for a form of poetry that was in accord with his own peculiar standards and yet not wholly incompatible, even at first sight, with Miss Overman's tastes." Buddy argues; he points out to Seymour Miss Overman's "shortcomings as a judge, or even a reader, of poetry." But Seymour persists. Says Buddy:

He then reminded me that on his first day in the public library (alone, aged six) Miss Overman, wanting or not as a judge of poetry, had opened a book to a plate of Leonardo's

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catapult and placed it brightly before him, and that it was no joy to him to finish writing a poem and know that Miss Overman would have trouble turning to it with pleasure or involvement.

And so Buddy backs down; he admits that

you can't argue with someone who believes, or just passionately suspects, that the poet's function is not to write what he must write but, rather, to write what he would write if his life depended on his taking responsibility for writing what he must in a style designed to shut out as few of his old librarians as humanly possible.

That strikes me as admirable. It is not an aesthetic of condescension, or of writing down to one's reader. It is an aesthetic of the most demanding order. Kurt Vonnegut's "old librarians," and the rest of us, should be proud of him.

The Oxford Book of American Light Verse
chosen and edited by William Harmon

(Oxford University Press; $15.95)

Light verse, when it owns up to the name, usually is consigned to the broom closet of American literature. There is, it seems, something decidedly second-rate about a poet's writing a limerick, or a paean to lager beer, instead of a devotional sonnet or an orphic prophecy. Not that the supposed inferiority of light verse can be blamed on the poet's laziness. "Writing light verse is very heavy work indeed," E. B. White once countered; and he added, "I get just as exhausted as the major poets."

To be sure, major American poets—Melville, Dickinson, Pound, Eliot, Frost, Stevens—have tossed off, on occasion, some pretty trivial items. Yet light verse, spurned by critics and scholars when written by mere versifiers, has had only readers to care for it. In later years, since the death of those slick weeklies (*Collier's, Saturday Evening Post*) that used to print verse as filler, even the readers must be thinning out. Now comes William Harmon, poet, critic, and Chapel Hill English professor, with a sprightly 540-page anthology showing the whole disreputable tradition from colonial times to the present, in all its goodness, richness, and variety.

What is light verse? Harmon eschews this ancient wrangle; but maybe it helps to regard light verse as stuff of a lower emotional intensity than poetry; and as easier reading. Although it tends to be witty or humorous, it doesn't have to be. By this rude definition, Harmon is within his rights to include gems of schoolroom poetry: "The Barefoot Boy," "Paul Revere's Ride," "A Visit from Saint Nicholas." He is on shakier ground to put in things too subtle and demanding to call light verse—John Crowe Ransom's "Philomela," say—or too emotionally deep, such as Bessie Smith's "Empty Bed Blues."

But I yap no more at Harmon's distinguished accomplishment. Splendidly browseworthy, his work makes a fit companion to Kingsley Amis's *New Oxford Book of English Light Verse* of last year. Comparing these two national products, you find that our home-grown one distinctly smells of its soil. While the mainstream of British light verse is pleasantly acid social criticism, polished to a fine gloss—the "Coffee-cups cool on the Vicar's harmonium" kind of thing—the spirit of American light verse is more vulgar, more obstreperous. In his introduction, Harmon makes a gallant attempt to sum up its character:

The senses of adventure and fun combine with a practical turn of mind to produce works that deflate the hifalutin, debunk the hypocritical, abridge the sesquipedalian, praise the praiseworthy, and even make fun of the stated or implied ideals of the Republic itself.

This makes out the American light-versifier to be an irreverent scoffer, apparently given to mistreating the flag and trampling mothers' apple pies into the dust. As if, however, to show the versifier praising the praiseworthy, Harmon gives us the hoariest old flag-waver of them all, Whittier's "Barbara Frietchie," and a celebration of Mom's pie (although lemon) by Edgar A. Guest. He even has a couple of kind words for Guest's outpourings—"amiable enough"—which may be the highest praise the Detroit rhyme-welder has from a respectable critic.

The more irreverent pieces definitely brand their authors as American. Surely no one will mistake for an import this ode by an anonymous cowhand, dating from back when canned foods were a novelty:

Carnation Milk is the best in the land;
Here I sit with a can in my hand—
No tits to pull, no hay to pitch,
You just punch a hole in the son of a bitch.

Clearly, the sesquipedalian is artfully abridged and the hifalutin effectively punctured in Billy Rose's and Marty Bloom's lyric "Does the Spearmint Lose Its Flavor on the Bedpost Overnight?"; in George Ade's "Il Janitorio," a take-off on opera libretti; in Nikki Giovanni's contemporary blues,

i'm a modern woman
ain't gonna let this get me down
gonna take my master charge
and get everything in town

—and in a lyric by General Joseph W. ("Vinegar Joe") Stilwell that salutes

Aromatic Chungking, where I welcomed the Spring,
In a mixture of beauty and stenches,
Of flowers and birds, with a sprinkling of turds,
And of bow-legged Szechuan wenches.

Harmon includes, too, poems that are bad unintentionally; and with native pride contends that American lousy poets can beat English lousy poets any day. He coins a name, Prismatics, for those Americans he deems "transcendently, surpassingly, superlatively bad"—Poe's dismal imitator Thomas Holley Chivers ("My Mary, mavourneen, the Moon of Mobile!"); Julia A. Moore, "The Sweet Singer of Michigan," whose lines, crawling on and on until they capture a rhyming word, may have shown Ogden Nash the way. Prismatic, too, is J. Gordon Coogler, author of the complaint, "Alas for the South, her books have grown fewer—/She never was much given to literature."

Few will envy Harmon his labors in rummaging the boneyards of American poetry. Luckily, his patient applications of the dustcloth have turned up a number of discoveries. There are some earlier, cruder stanzas of "Yankee Doodle"; a curious piece, "The Judge with the Sore Rump," by a writer of the Federalist period, St. George Tucker; and two anonymous appeals to John Harralson, a Confederate collector of

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niter to make gunpowder, who daily sent round a barrel for the ladies of Selma to contribute their urine in. Against the Romantic movement in 19th-century American verse, there flowed a strong countercurrent. It appears in the world of that odd, puckish humorist, Ben King, whose best passages contain a certain wistfulness:

Nothing to breathe but air.
Quick as a flash 'tis gone;
Nowhere to fall but off
Nowhere to stand but on.

Longfellow, not universally revered, was assaulted again and again in parody. Among such assaults, my favorite is a later one (1918) by Carolyn Wells, who rewrites "The Purple Cow" in the measures of "The Day Is Done":

Such cows have power to quiet
Our restless thoughts and rude;
They come like the Benedictine
That follows after food.

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That has the chime of genuine Longfellow to it, even reproducing the smug tone: the cozy little drink on a full stomach.

Not only the debunking spirit but the American language stamps our light verse indelibly. While high-flying bards of the early Republic had trouble with certain American place-names—for after all, it's hard to maintain an epic decorum while singing of a battle fought near a town called Anthony's Nose—our light-versifiers allude gleefully to humble, warty monickers like Skunk's Misery, Vermont; Lick Lizzard, North Carolina; Negationville, Virginia; and the Skuntic River. In "Pennsylvania Places," T. A. Daly devotes a whole piece to such memorable names—just one stateful—and fittingly, Harmon puts in Stephen Vincent Benét's "American Names" ("Bury my heart at Wounded Knee"). Wisely, we are offered only a sprinkling of verse in dialect, formerly written and consumed by the bale. Only a couple of times does Harmon stoop to the shaggy-dog poem that takes whole stanzas to lead up to a pun. Such games seem forgivable when brief, as in Keith Preston's four-line "Lapsus Linguae":

We wanted Li Wing
But we winged Willie Wong.
A sad but excusable
Slip of the tong.

Harmon has a good eye for clever fluff like that, and for epigrams, and for witty forms such as the lately invented double dactyl:

'Jiminy Whillikers,
Admiral Samuel
Eliot Morrison,
Where is your ship?'

'I, sir, am HMS
Historiography's
Disciplinarian.
Button your lip.'

—to give a brilliant example by George Starbuck. Few limericks are let in, all reasonably clean, like this sinister one by Edward Gorey:

From the bathing machine came a din
As of jollification within;
It was heard far and wide
And the oncoming tide
Had a definite flavour of gin.

Besides a solid array of folk songs, there's a choice gathering of other popular song lyrics: show tunes (Porter, Loesser, Hammerstein II, and Hart); Johnny Mercer's deft refurbishing of "The Glow-worm"; and Max Shulman's "Honest Abe Lincoln" (to the tune of "Old Black Joe"):

I'm Honest Abe,
With whiskers on my chin . . .
I freed the slabe,
My face . . . is . . . on . . . the . . . fin . . .

I nev-er tole
No-thin but . . . the . . . truth. . .
Howcome you pulled the trigger on me,
John . . . Wilkes . . . Booth?

Squinting into the future, Walt Whitman once declared that he could see no further usefulness for "rhyming metre" except in "persiflage and the comic." Today, I suppose, most American poets would agree, having turned over the old musical forms to popular songsmiths, light-versifiers, and writers of singing commercials. As John Barth in "The Minstrel's Last Lay" makes one such liberated poet declare,

Stranded by my foes,
Nowadays I write in prose,
Forsaking measure, rhyme, and honeyed diction;

Amphora's *my muse;*
When I finish off the booze,
I hump the jug and fill her up with fiction.

Barth may be kidding, but there's a terrible rightness in his thrust: certainly poets have given us more novels than major poems lately. Working through Harmon's survey, I was struck by the close parallel between the decline of formal elements (rhyme, meter) in light verse and their recession from American poetry at large. Starting with Whitman, that lone pioneer of open form, whom Harmon represents by the mildly sarcastic "A Boston Ballad," rhymelessness doesn't return until Stephen Crane tried it in the 1890s. Then it thrives again in the 1920s in the experiments of Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Gertrude Stein. At last, you get a colossal explosion of informality down at the recent end. Some of it is delicious: Gregory Corso's satire on "Marriage," that begins in a rhyme-scheme, then decides the hell with it; Donald Hall's "To a Waterfowl," an account of the horrors of giving poetry readings; some Jonathan Williams transcripts of hill-country talk; some deft ironic pieces by Michael Benedikt and James Tate.

And yet, toiling through other specimens that haven't an obvious form, you find yourself wondering if, after all, light verse doesn't gain from a certain

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neatness. You suspect that (to paraphrase Robert Frost) writing light verse without meter or rhyme may be like playing tennis without net, court, or rackets, with a waterlogged ball. It's cheering, however, to find a few contemporaries strutting their formal skills: J. V. Cunningham and Howard Nemerov in their epigrams; Anthony Hecht, William Cole, and John Updike; John Hollander in his sonnet to Margaret Dumont, the *grande dame* perpetually insulted by Groucho Marx. With or without rhyme, anyway, light verse keeps coming on—as healthy and unkillable as kudzu.

X. J. Kennedy

X. J. Kennedy's most recent book is verse for children, *The Phantom Ice Cream Man* (Atheneum).

Desolate Angel: Jack Kerouac, The Beat Generation, and America by Dennis McNally

(Random House; $15)

It may seem hard to believe, but at the time of his death 10 years ago, Jack Kerouac was considered a has-been, all but forgotten by those who had read *On the Road* and proclaimed him the king of the Beats. The hippies, the inheritors of the freedom that Kerouac extolled and exercised, had never heard of him—or, if they had, thought of him as one of those old guys who wrote books. He languished in Orlando, Florida—alcoholic, dyspeptic, given to fits of anger against both the Establishment and those who opposed it. Was he a man without a country? No, never that, for he was always American, knew it and glorified in it, and gave his whole life to proving it. What he was, I suppose, was a writer without a readership, a literary hero without a following, an idea whose time had come and gone.

Well, if that last was true 10 years ago, then Jack Kerouac today is an idea whose time has now come back again. Not only are his novels selling well once more in paperback reprint, but books about him now appear about as regularly as studies of Faulkner and Fitzgerald used to. There was Ann Charters's *Kerouac*, a bibliographer's work that was dry and revealing by turns. This was followed by Barry Gifford's and Lawrence Lee's *Jack's Book*, which the co-authors describe quite accurately as an "oral biography." And then came Carolyn Cassady's *Heart Beat*, a memoir of her life with Neal Cassady (the mad Dean Moriarty of Kerouac's "road" books) and of her affair with Jack, from which a movie has been made that is scheduled for release in the not-too-distant future. And now: *Desolate Angel*, which is being touted as the definitive Kerouac biography.

Is it? Well, perhaps. It is certainly the best organized narrative account of his life. Dennis McNally has packed a great deal of information into the book's 400 pages, yet it all comes out in smooth-flowing style. If there is not much new information in it, then that is because the same ground had been covered pretty thoroughly in the earlier books—including Kerouac's own, for he was a compulsively autobiographical writer. By the same token, however, if the story is by now an old one, it loses nothing at all in the retelling.

The child of French-Canadian parents, Jack was born Jean Louis Kerouac in the old New England mill town of Lowell, Massachusetts, just in time to see his brother Gerard, the family saint, die of rheumatic fever. As far as he roamed and as hard as he ran, he never really left Lowell behind. His family, particularly his mother in later years, exercised a kind of tyranny over him. And he never really got over being the dreamy kid he had been while growing up along the Merrimack River.

By biographical convention, dreamy kids grow up intending to be writers—and so it was with Kerouac when he headed off to Columbia on a football scholarship just before the war. In fact, nearly everything he did from then on was determined by that desire—quitting Columbia to ship out in the Merchant Marine, low-lifing with William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg among the denizens of Times Square, even venturing forth with Neal Cassady on those voyages of discovery which he described so excitingly. His was virtually a life lived in search of material, and as he found that material, he filled book after book with it—*The Subterraneans, The Dharma Bums, Desolation Angels, Tristessa, Big Sur*—in that tumble of titles that appeared once Kerouac and the Beat Generation had exploded on the scene.

McNally handles all this quite well—although he does show a rather distressing tendency to use language in the same imprecise, bombastic, shotgun style that Kerouac did. And what is forgivable in a novelist should not necessarily be permitted the novelist's biographer. For instance, McNally tells us that "almost all fifties' magazine articles had been rigidly narrative in format," but this is simply not so, for the prevailing style then was expository; but I truly think expository was what he meant, for he goes on to contrast "narrative" with "the Beat's personal, confessional view."

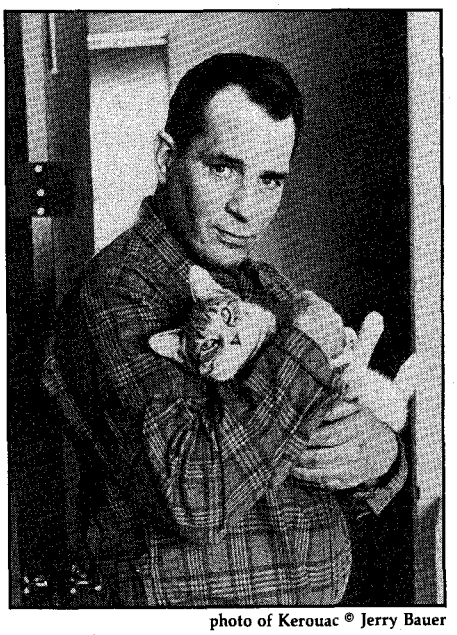

photo of Kerouac © Jerry Bauer

Note that this example is one—one of the many in the text—in which McNally takes it upon himself to explain the 1950s to the reader. Judging from his photograph, he was born sometime early in that decade. That being the case, it is not surprising that he makes mistakes not so much in the facts as in the *feeling* of the period. And in the details: he associates Matthew Arnold with the New Critics, whereas if Arnold had influence on any critical school at all, it was through Lionel Trilling on the social and moral critics of the *Partisan Review*. He compares Kerouac's "spontaneous bop prosody" to the bebop of Charlie Parker and the action painting

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of Jackson Pollock. While it is true that Jack Kerouac thought he was modeling his automatic prose style on Parker's improvisations, it is also plain from what he has written of it that he had absolutely no grasp of what was really going on in jazz; he thought of it as far more structureless and free than it is. (And if Kerouac had only an enthusiastic listener's grasp of music, then his biographer is no more knowledgeable, talking as he does a few pages later of "the fundamental chord changes that made rock out of rhythm and blues"; in fact, both are based on traditional blues.) The analogy of Kerouac's prose approach to action painting seems to make more sense, but I suspect this may be because I know less about painting than I do about music.

It is best not to attempt the polymathic approach unless one is a true polymath. What Dennis McNally shows himself to be here is an historian, a scholar, a diligent researcher who can gather facts from the most diverse sources and weave them into a nearly seamless story that runs from romance to tragedy in less than five decades. But McNally is evidently not much interested in the literary aspect of his subject. There is virtually no attempt in this book to evaluate or even formally comment upon the texts left by Kerouac. Nor, beyond comparisons to bop and action painting, is there any analysis of his style. Although *Desolate Angel* is the biography of a novelist, it is not, by any means, a literary biography.

The Beat Generation seemed something more than (some would say, other than) a literary movement when it became known in the late 1950s, and that is also how it is remembered by most and written about today, over 20 years later. Still, it was a literary movement, one that inspired poets and novelists and journalists and had far-reaching effects in loosening up strictures regarding subject matter, language, and style. Since then there has been nothing to compare to it. That is the real reason why Kerouac and the rest are still important to us today and will continue to be until another such generation or movement comes along. If one ever does.

Bruce Cook

Bruce Cook the author of *The Beat Generation* (Scribner's).

Malignant Neglect
by The Environmental Defense Fund and Robert H. Boyle

(Knopf; $10)

Cancer is a puzzling disease, and so are some of the people who die from it. Every literate adult knows that cigarettes may be hazardous to health, yet sales of cigarettes are greater now than 15 years ago when the first surgeon general's report on the health consequences of smoking was published. What should a humane government do—throw up its hands and let the public smoke itself to death? Or benevolently compel people to do what's good for them by banning cigarettes?

And what should be done about benzene, a vital industrial chemical now known to be mildly carcinogenic? Should industry, at vast expense, be required to ensure that its workers never come into contact with the substance? Maybe yes, because the exposure is involuntary, unlike that to cigarette smoke. On the other hand, if the citizenry in aggregate ignores cancer data that threaten its indulgences, why be more officious on the public's behalf than it would be itself?

These issues of judgment are not addressed in *Malignant Neglect*, a set of essays on cancer written by members of the Environmental Defense Fund in Washington. The thrust of the book is that all carcinogens are almost equally bad, and that we could avoid exposure if only the government regulators would be quicker to ban them. Unfortunately there is considerable substance to this thesis. Carcinogens have no threshold dose beneath which they are harmless, and time and again it has required a suit filed by the Environmental Defense Fund or one of its sister organizations to compel regulatory agencies to take appropriate action against substances discovered to be carcinogens. *Malignant Neglect* is for the most part an excellent collection of case studies of government fumbling and negligence in protecting public health against menaces such as pesticides and PCBs.

Where the book perhaps disappoints is in its aim, at least as stated on the blurb, "to show precisely which chemicals are truly serious cancer-causing agents, and how serious they are . . . and to offer practical and sensible advice about what you personally can do. . . ." But far from making practical comparisons among carcinogens, the authors lump substances of all degrees of suspected carcinogenicity into a single category of life-threatening miasmas. Viruses, which may yet turn out to play a major role in the etiology of human cancer, get hardly a line in *Malignant Neglect*. Microwaves, on the other hand, are included as possible carcinogens on the basis of apparently no better evidence than *The Zapping of America*, a voguish but essentially frivolous conspiracy thesis of no certain worth.

Malignant Neglect is not outstandingly helpful in presenting the major statistics about cancer, either. It uncritically repeats HEW Secretary Joseph Califano's implausible and probably erroneous assertion that at least 20 percent of all cancer in the United States may be work-related. Along the same lines, it argues that since most cancers are environmentally caused, they are "largely preventable." This is to raise false hopes. Many, perhaps most, of those environmental causes are agents such as sunshine, viruses, and background radiation to which exposure is inevitable. All we can control are the man-made chemicals; yet even when one of these is identified as a carcinogen, as for example saccharin has been, the public is so loath to forgo it that the elimination even of this class of carcinogens is made problematic.

The authors of *Malignant Neglect* may be growing beyond the certain reach of present medical knowledge in presuming to advise the reader how usefully to reduce his exposure to carcinogens. Their advice, in summary, is as follows: don't smoke, don't drink too much, don't sunbathe between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., don't ask the doctor for too many x-rays, use henna instead of hair dyes, don't cook over an open fire but be careful with microwave ovens, don't eat fat, liver, or sweetbreads, filter

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your drinking water through charcoal, don't use pesticides around the home, and don't inhale asbestos fibers.

The list is all very well, but neglects to indicate the relative degree of risk. If the hazard of eating a barbecued steak is comparable to other kinds of risk we incur daily, such as car or air travel—and I suspect it is considerably less—then the reader should be informed. The injunction to quit smoking is probably worth more than all the other tidbits of advice combined. But maybe better medical advice altogether would be simply to lead a healthy life, rather than follow a faddish-sounding regimen aimed specifically at minimizing exposure to presumed carcinogens.

Some kinds of cancer are avoidable, and *Malignant Neglect* represents the best of the attitude which holds that everything possible should be done to prevent the disease. At the same time it is only realistic to acknowledge that most forms of cancer may turn out to be uncontrollable. Cancer may be a face of natural death, and although the abolition of all disease is the implicit aim of medical research, that is a goal we can aspire to but cannot hope to attain.

Nicholas Wade

Nicholas Wade is a reporter for *Science* magazine.

Working for Capitalism by Richard M. Pfeffer

(Columbia University Press; $20, $5.95 paper)

The goods news about Richard Pfeffer's new work is that his volume really offers you two books for the price of one. The bad news is that only one is worth buying. Still, it remains a good investment.

The first book-within-a-book records Pfeffer's experience as a trashman in a Baltimore "piston rings" factory where he worked during his leave from a political science post at Johns Hopkins. He begins with his own attempt to get a blue-collar job, and he writes sensitively about the humiliation that employers regularly impose on unskilled job-seekers. His success in being hired as trashman left him exhausted and confused.

Once on the job, Pfeffer encountered that bewildering array of technological forces, cultural differences, production requirements, discipline, foremen's arrogance, workers' timidity mixed with occasional courage, and the constant struggle between management and managed that characterize the modern American workplace. Here Pfeffer makes a genuine contribution, leading us through his initiation into the life of the factory, his attempts to make friends, his uncertain efforts to organize, his conflict with Tank and Marbles and the other union hacks, and his ultimate ouster from the factory in a layoff.

All of these experiences involved vastly more complicated dynamics than simply "workers versus capitalists," and yet at its most fundamental level, as Pfeffer well illustrates, the profit system remains central. The internecine conflicts, the personality and racial clashes, the interactions of age and skill and ideology all occur within a context ultimately set by the employer's efforts to earn a profit. This is the point that David Montgomery, Harry Braverman, Herbert Gutman, and other perceptive analysts of the capitalist workplace have attempted to elucidate, and Pfeffer's account augments their analyses.

The second, and distinctly less successful, book-within-a-book apparently derives from Pfeffer's other purpose in entering the factory: he "needed for professional purposes [i.e., tenure] . . . to publish another book." A participant book apparently would not do, and so Pfeffer appended to his factory experiences a critical review of six recent books about work: Studs Terkel's *Working*, the HEW report *Work in America*, Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, and three others. Unfortunately, Pfeffer's review is naive and superficial, and serves as little more than an introduction to these relatively well-known books. For example, Pfeffer criticizes the HEW volume for failing to point explicitly to capitalism as the source of work dissatisfaction, yet he misses the importance of an official report documenting the systematic alienation engendered by American workplaces. (A parallel, though a pale one, to the work of Leonard Hoerner and his fellow Factory Inspectors which Marx used in such devastating fashion comes to mind.) Similarly, Pfeffer presents Braverman's argument, but he fails to note the artificiality of an analysis in which Braverman, at the outset, excised the workers' contribution to workplace relations. These are not minor lapses but rather reflect the thinness of Pfeffer's appended critical review.

Yet the subtlety and diversity of the dialectic between workers and their employers, so richly documented in the account of Pfeffer's mill experience, leads to a number of issues that Pfeffer could more profitably have investigated. One has to do with the nature of the working class. Pfeffer seems not to notice the irony of his having to enter the factory and study the "working class" in order to keep his job. Another has to do with nature of unions. The factory's union, seen by Pfeffer as the second pillar of workplace authoritarianism, "exemplified institutionalized collaboration" between workers and capitalists and "support[ed] managerial prerogatives"; it certainly showed no eagerness to hear its own rank and file. Yet Local 1784, run by timid and thoroughly insulated union bureaucrats, is after all a local of the International Association of Machinists, whose president, William Winpisinger, has taken the lead (and somewhat lonely) role in forging a new left-labor coalition.

Such ambiguities make the current political economy more complex than can be ascertained by a seven-month sojourn down with the working class. The working class has become differentiated—segmented, in the phrase of the working-class literature. The old industrial, blue-collar proletariat has by no means disappeared, but beside it stand two other segments, equally "working class" but with different circumstances: the unskilled, low-wage, unorganized, highly female, black, and Hispanic "secondary labor force" in the service industries; and the bureaucratized professional, technical, and supervisory employees of the so-called middle class. All "work for capitalism," and their methods of carrying on their struggle with employers have become diverse and complicated.

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Ghettoized in the industrial segment of the working class, the unions have seen their power and potential greatly limited.

Yet Pfeffer's insight into his workplace experience cannot be dismissed so easily. It reminds us that the strategy of the union hierarchies—to limit rather than tolerate rank-and-file dissent, to impede rather than promote internal democracy, to build reliable rather than energetic organization—has contributed mightily to the union movement's weakness. Pfeffer has given us a dramatic illustration of this lesson.

Richard Edwards

Richard Edwards is author of *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the 20th Century* (Basic Books) and teaches economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

The Old Patagonian Express: By Train Through the Americas by Paul Theroux

(Houghton Mifflin; $11.95)

This is a sequel to the author's superbly entertaining *The Great Railway Bazaar: By Train Through Asia*. Longer than its predecessor, and a good deal grimmer, it has fewer comic moments to divert us from the poverty Mr. Theroux everywhere encounters and which, since he speaks Spanish, is not so forgettably anonymous as the Asian distress that figured as little more than dusky scenery in the *Railway Bazaar*. I suspect that this book was also harder to write, since here Theroux was not inventing a form for a novel experience but uninspiredly following his old literary tracks. It is certainly harder to read. Theroux's prose is as sheerly enjoyable as ever and his insights into individual and social character are as fresh and penetrating, but the vagaries of rail travel in Latin America repeatedly tempt him to ramble from the main line of his narrative, and the book is a bit bloated in consequence. Theroux's padding, however, is always lively and intelligent, so it seems ungrateful to complain. What is it, then, that makes this book difficult, at once less entertaining and more interesting than the *Railway Bazaar*? It is, I think, the morally ironic contrast between the human misery Theroux observes and his will to make art and money out of rendering it, an irony that is echoed in our will to enjoy ourselves as much as we did on his earlier trip, and damn the disquieting disparity between us and the direly poor peasants we glimpse on every page.

Paul Theroux, for those who have not made his delightful company, is a prolific producer of novels, short stories, and essays, all of the first rank. Many of his fictions deal with outsiders, foreigners, or fugitives who live by stealth on the margins of alien societies, a role Theroux seems to have chosen for himself. Born and raised in Medford, Massachusetts, he lives in England, has sojourned for longish spells in Singapore and Uganda, and periodically takes these railway junkets to the back of beyond. He likes it out there—the danger, the solitude, the challenge to perception and imagination. It is a novelist's dream, as well as the fulfillment of a boyhood fantasy of adventure on the rails.

Theroux's rail journeys begin with a stroke of the arbitrary. In the current case, he sees that, by linking railway to railway, he can travel from Medford all the way to Patagonia, and to this jagged line on the map he submits his will and devotion for three arduous months, rather in the way a novelist submits his imagination to the arbitrary line of his plot. It is as if Theroux has found a form of experience that replicates the spiritual challenge of writing a novel. It goes even further than that, however. For not only is this journey like writing a novel, but during the course of it Theroux himself seems to become a character in a novel. His name is "Paul," and the novel he is in begins in Medford and ends in Patagonia because that is where its author, one Paul Theroux, has decreed it should end. Again and again, Paul wants to call it quits, to go home to his family, but each time he submits to the tyrannical design of his author, who is, of course, himself. If reading this circular description has made you anxious, then you can imagine how Theroux felt during this often infernal trip, thinking what a fool he was to follow a railway map to Patagonia as if it were the plot of his life. There are moments of panic on this journey, and they too make this a darker book than the *Railway Bazaar*.

But by no means all is dark. Theroux showers wit and insight from Boston to Fort Worth on the Amtrak leg of his trip; take, for example, his description of "The preposterous solemnity of the Boston University spires, and across the frozen Charles River the white steeples of Harvard, each one, in its frailty, like a failed attempted at an ivory tower." But the book really comes into its own in Laredo, Texas, where he remarks a revealing division of labor between Laredo and its sister city across the Rio Grande, Nuevo Laredo. "Laredo had the airport and the churches; Nuevo Laredo, the brothels and the baskets. Each nationality seemed to gravitate to its own special area of competence." It is, as Theroux says, a "significant image," emblematic of the Yankee relationship to Latin America as we see it in this book, as we see it, in particular, in the desperate face of a rich New York woman who has come south looking for a Latin lover, and in the leering face of a lewd Texan who visits Costa Rica for its whores, as well as in the smug faces of the basket-seeking sort of tourists who flock to the Inca ruins in Peru. Theroux is too much of a novelist, too much a relisher of types, to out and out scorn these people, but plainly he sees them as exploiters. To me, this seems priggish. For if the tourists are imperialists of the flesh and the buck, he is an imperialist of the eye making a literary raid on Latin America, down there to bag insights and perceptions off a veritable pampas of pain and injustice.

Theroux may be blind to the irony of his own situation, but his eye for irony is otherwise acute. To be sure, he is not above making such easy notations as that Jesus is always pictured as a gringo on the Mexican postcards, or that (following the cue of Aldous Huxley) there is no progress visible in Progresso, no rancho in Rancho, and appallingly little democracy in Democracia. But he also makes more resonant observations—for example, that

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whereas the mud huts in Guatemala are not built to withstand earthquakes, the tombstones of the dead are. And in an objective description, he can seem to catch the whole unhappy fate of a people, as in this Keatsian image of a church window in earthquake-ravaged Guatemala City: "Tremors left cracks between windows and separated, in the stained glass of those windows, the shepherd from his little flock, the saint from his gold staff, the martyr from his persecutors."

In El Salvador, he attends a soccer game which ends in a rain of inflated condoms, dropped like balloons by the fans from the upper balconies onto those in the grandstand. In Baranquilla, Colombia, he sees the walled mansions of the barons of the American drug trade perched, blasphemously white, on the heights above a city full of homeless children. In the streets of Guayaquil, Ecuador, rats snap at his heels and gnaw through the ceiling of his hotel room. And in Buenos Aires, Jorge Luis Borges gives him a memorable interview, and then he takes the Old Patagonian Express to a desolation called Esquel, where his trip ends.

Do take it with him. But be ready to come back feeling a little guilty. It's the price one should pay for staring through fine prose at starving children while joggers pad by in the parks and one's thoughts race ahead to the crackers and the cheese.

Jack Beatty

Brief Review

Secret Rendezvous by Kobo Abe translated by Juliet W. Carpenter

(Knopf; $8.95)

Pity the hapless browser who picks up *Secret Rendezvous* mildly curious as to what constitutes a Japanese best seller. This novel makes our popular mysteries, thrillers, and science fiction look like pretty pallid fare. Kobo Abe delights in the excessive and the perverse. With its surrealistic setting, its claustrophobic atmosphere, and its increasingly distressing scenes of sexual decadence and violence, *Secret Rendezvous* disturbs rather than titillates. To the Western mind at least, this book is maddeningly, perhaps pointlessly, abstruse.

Abe's hero is a mild-mannered jump shoes salesman (an athletic shoe with a special air-bubble spring that dramatically increases the wearer's running and jumping abilities). He sets off one morning to track down his wife, who has been carried off, inexplicably, by an ambulance. Once inside the labyrinthian underground hospital, the man (the characters don't have names, only abstract identities) finds himself conducting his own full-scale investigation. The ostensible object of his search is his wife, but soon he realizes that in a strange way he is involved in a penetrating self-investigation, and the hospital officials who profess to be helping him actually spin out the hunt by luring him deeper and deeper into their own demented activities.

The sick are not cured at this hospital. In fact, the doctors here yearn to be patients themselves. The assistant director embodies, in his own monstrous form, the hospital's peculiar philosophy of the seductiveness of ill-health. Striving to overcome his impotence, and enacting his conviction that a good doctor makes a good patient, he undergoes surgery to graft another man's lower half onto his torso. Sensations are transmitted electronically from his new sexual center to his brain so that he can experience sex vicariously. He is absurdly proud of his new identity as "the horse" and informs the man didactically that

> *only man has turned away from the law of the survival of the fittest, taken up the weak and ailing, and guaranteed their right to survive. So heroes perish, but the weak live on. One measure of civilization, in fact, is the percentage of misfits in its society.*

By the horse's standards, the hospital is a civilized place indeed, with its incestuous circle of rapists, voyeurs, 13-year-old nymphomaniacs, test-tube babies, and centaurs.

Needless to say, hospital administrators do not do anything as straightforward as overseeing the medical complex. Instead, they spend their time monitoring an intensive surveillance system that records the illicit "secret" rendezvous of patients. The tapes are then used for scientific study and are sold at a handsome profit to over 4000 eager fans. This is a grotesque fantasy world where individuals are held hostage by their obsessive desires. If they lack the resourcefulness to enact their fantasies, they can simply witness them enacted by others.

Not surprisingly, the man soon finds his own sense of time and purpose hopelessly confused and his proximity to the outside world recedes. When his wife suddenly appears at the novel's climax, the star participant in the hospital's obscene founding day celebration, he brushes past her distractedly. The hospital succeeds in making a patient of him, and the novel ends, no less perplexingly than it began, with the man's frenzied pursuit of his own secret rendezvous.

Kobo Abe will not find the enthusiastic reception in the United States that he has found in Japan. The Japanese seem to embrace the unspeakable openly, as a form of release, accepting facets of the imagination Americans often skirt—even in the most lurid popular fiction. But if nothing else, *Secret Rendezvous* offers its Western readers a glimpse of the idiosyncracies of Japanese culture, and a reminder of our own comparative restraint as, with queasy bewilderment, we inspect Abe's nightmarish world.

D.W.

Correspondence, *from page 7*

stitute or an analogue of perimeters, meaning limits or boundaries, which is what I suspect you meant.

Edward Newman
Woodland Hills, California

Dowdy Chrysler

To the editors:

In his article "Welfare Chrysler" (*TNR*, August 4 & 11), Stephen Chapman calls General Motors "the biggest corporation in America and the biggest automaker in the world." Actually, it is not the biggest corporation in America but it is indeed the largest industrial corporation in the world. Ma Bell, however, is bigger.

He also said General Motors had planned to downsize its entire fleet before the 1973 Arab embargo. But GM had produced small models years earlier, for example, the Chevrolet Camaro and the Pontiac Firebird.

It must be observed that Chrysler hasn't enjoyed "halcyon" days since the

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passing of its founder, a period of almost 40 years. All of its leaders, from K. T. Keller through Tex Colbert and Lynn Townsend to John Ricciardo, have fostered or been dogged by marginal operations and financial problems.

The real architect of Chrysler's miseries was Keller, who insisted on producing dowdy cars, a tradition his successors have nurtured faithfully. Given this sorry history, its financial backers must be more speculators than investors. If ever an organization is not deserving of welfare, it is this witless enterprise.

Howard M. Stiller
Sarasota, Florida

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THE NEW REPUBLIC MAGAZINE

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Natural light, natural childbirth, natural foods—preferred choices of many moderns in revolt against the technological character of modernity. An enthusiast of brown rice, alfalfa sprouts, and ginseng tells me it adds up to the search for "a more natural life." Pretty soon, at the rate things are going, advanced thinkers will be talking about natural rights. The preference for the natural, rather than for the artificial or the alien, is thought of today as vaguely left on the political spectrum, but this wasn't always so. Progressives used to trust in science. The obsession with natural purity belonged to reactionaries. Remember Colonel Jack D. Ripper (Sterling Hayden) in *Dr. Strangelove,* hysterical about the threat to his precious bodily fluids? Or the struggle against fluorides in the water supply, widely and wildly seen as a communist plot to debilitate and adulterate America? Mary McCarthy wrote a quarter century ago about a nativist strain in American thought and its Arcadian view of an unspoiled—that is to say, natural—landscape and culture. To her the various Red scares, including Joe McCarthy's, drew sustenance from that strain.

In 1968 I worked for Eugene McCarthy's presidential bid in the California primary. My assignment was to screen kooks and kooky ideas from the campaign manager's door. In the course of this employ I met a sandal-wearing vegetable juice fanatic. (You've met his prototype in Emerson's essay on the Chatto Street reformers and in George Orwell's evocation of the Labour party conference.) He had some proscriptive nostrum about food preservatives which he wanted the candidate to endorse. I was impressed and brought the notion to the staff, among whom I found sympathetic listeners. But the late Tom Finney, a gentle Oklahoman and wise Washington lawyer then running Gene's effort, rendered the decisive verdict on the suggestion: "It wouldn't bring us many votes. Half the people who believe that stuff are Reaganites; the other half are already on our side." Some years before that I was saying a good word for Castro—yes, it was a very long time ago—to which a graduate school classmate snorted, "Oh Castro, he's already betrayed the revolution. He's had two years to get the Cubans off refined sugar and hasn't done a damned thing about it."

But all this stuff about "natural" *is* serious business. Faddism aside, knowledgeable consumers and scientists take it seriously, and they are right to. So, of course, big business has tried to horn in on the serious interest in natural foods, and it has done so dishonestly, which is also natural. This had led the Federal Trade Commission staff to poke into deceptive "natural" claims in advertising. One of the most egregious offenders in setting forth misleading claims about its products is Anheuser-Busch, makers of Budweiser and Michelob. The beer industry is very competitive; in fact, it's very litigious. Doubtless it's the rough scramble for market share, not the truth certainly, that's persuaded Anheuser to promote its beer-making process as the "natural way . . . without additives . . . without artificial chemicals . . . 100 percent natural ingredients . . . natural aging . . . all natural . . . another wonder of nature." The truth is that all commercially available beer is made through a very complicated series of chemical and molecular changes. Additives not found in nature are put into beer and remain there. One of the additives in Anheuser's beers is a newly developed acid-enzyme, Abincose, for which the manufacturer claims all kinds of miracle-of-science artificial achievements. Even the water that goes into the beer is chemically treated. Beer is a terrific drink, particularly as we head for the football season. But it's not natural, that's certain.

Jackie O. prefers artifice to nature, as you can tell just by looking. One of her causes has been Venice, a city with no inner life, the greatest urban artifice of them all. Jackie's had her way as usual. The city on the lagoons has stopped sinking, though not due to anything the big-name savers did. Nature did it, all by itself, mysteriously. The money the Venice committee raised was used to restore some art and will help all 200 of Venice's 107 churches withstand the ravages of time and tourism. D'Annunzio, a Venetian, a poet, and a maker of great utterances, once swore: "We are not, we will not be a museum, a hostelry . . . a sky painted Prussian blue for honeymoon couples." He did not have his way. I've just been to Venice: a museum, a hostelry, that's just what the city is. And wonderful, but not like nature.

Jimmy Carter's close feeling for his kinfolk is natural enough. His affinity for other people who happen to be named Carter is more curious. I like Hodding Carter, an old friend from Harvard, who is spokesman at the State Department, right ahead of the Messrs. Reston, *père et fils.* His job is a thankless one. Some months ago he was obliged to deny indignantly on behalf of the State Department that Emperor Bokassa I of the Central African Empire, a US aid recipient, had personally participated in the murder of 100 schoolboys. A few days later Carter had to admit that, yes, it happened, but just to 40 boys. The latest Carter in the administration is W. Beverly Carter, our representative to the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Two resolutions on Israel were before the commission recently. Ambassador Carter's vote on them, it was left to State Department spokesman Carter to clarify, "does not represent the position of the United States. The United States would not have supported those resolutions." This is not what you'd call natural behavior for an ambassador. And the response would be unnatural for any administration, but not this one.

Something that's natural is that people feel for their own. A letter in the *New York Times* from *TNR* contributor and socialist theoretician Michael Harrington, I. F. Stone, and a few other writers appeals for the lives of 12 socialists now under sentence of death in Iran. This is, thank goodness, not quite one of those "save-the-artists-and-intellectuals-to-hell-with-the-carpenters-and-grocers" committees. I'd join this appeal if I thought anything I said might move those affected by Ramadan fever to compassion. OK, I join their appeal anyway. Doubtless the signatories see these threatened people as some kind of kin. Otherwise why these particularly? What about the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others equally imperiled, but not so enlightened as to be socialists, those who are just Kurds and adulterers and homosexuals and from the Arab sects Khomeini despises? The editors of the *Nation* in our country and the *New Statesman* in England are now apoplectic about the rule of the mullahs in Tehran and Qom. They're even calling it fascist. That's because the revolutionary left is faring badly under the present regime. But these two journals welcomed the regime's coming not many months ago. There should be no surprise about what's occurred. It's exactly what Khomeini promised.

M.P.

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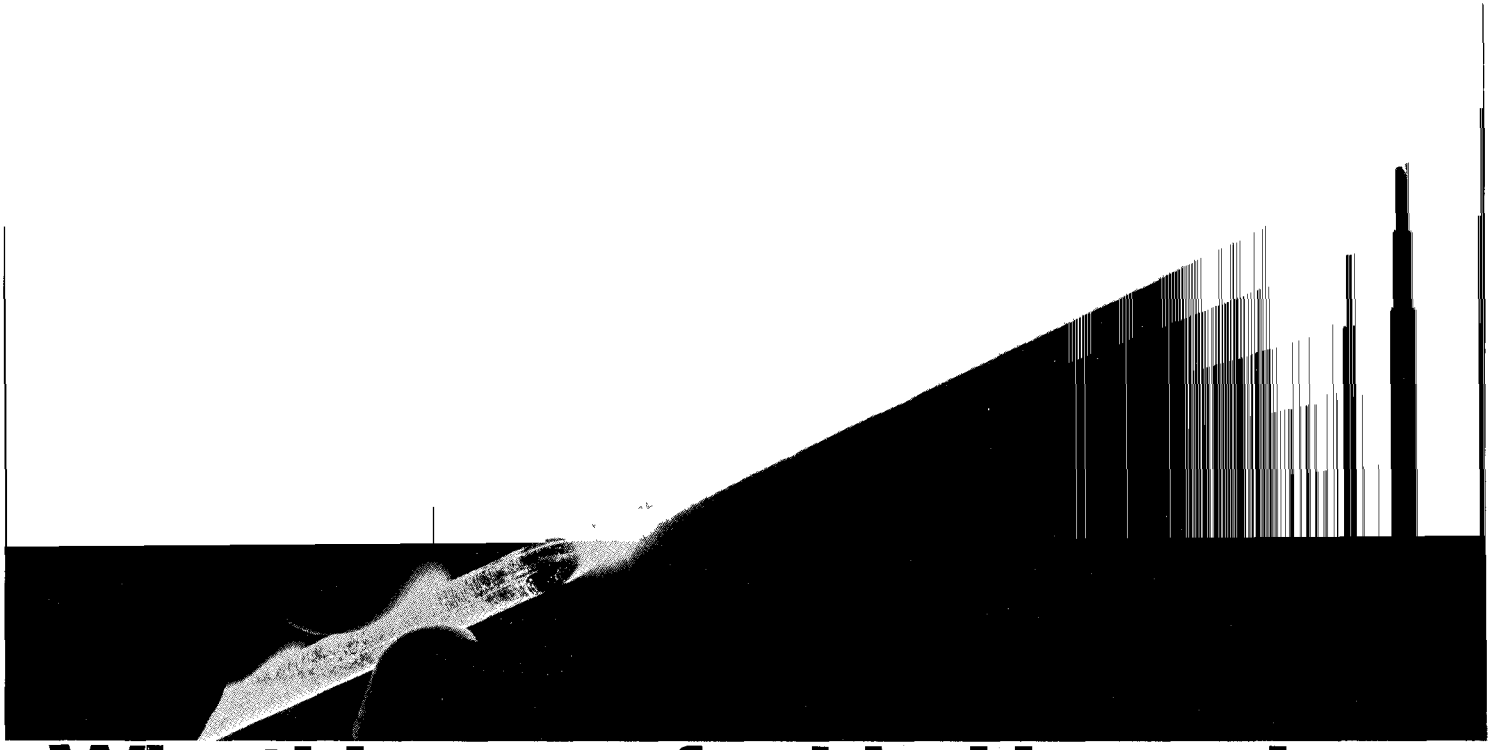

Why this one-of-a-kind invention didn't end up as the only one of its kind.

Every new invention needs another new invention—the one that can mass-produce it at an affordable cost.

For example, Bell Labs invented a process for making the glass rods from which hair-thin fibers used in lightwave communications can be drawn. The fibers have far greater capacity than conventional copper wires, so they'll help keep costs down. In fact, they've been carrying voice, data, and video signals under city streets for about two years in a Bell System demonstration.

But standard lightwave systems will require *miles* of the fiber, produced at low cost and to specifications nothing short of microscopic.

That's where Western Electric's Engineering Research Center comes in.

A Unique Center

The Center is devoted exclusively to manufacturing research.

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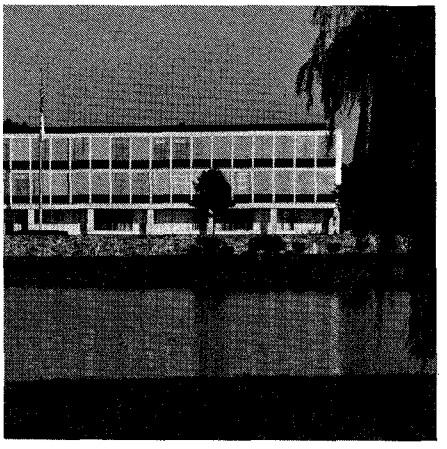

For example, while Bell Labs scientists were inventing new glass fibers, Western Electric engineers and scientists were tackling the manufacturing problems involved.

The fibers had to be drawn from molten glass at high speeds, with less than a 1% deviation in diameter.

But how do you control a "thread" of glass being spun at rates up to 15 feet per second?

Scientists and engineers at the Center discovered that laser light beamed onto the fiber cast a characteristic pattern. By correlating the pattern to the fiber's diameter, they were able to build a monitoring system into the fiber drawing machinery. It measures the fiber 1000 times per second, automatically adjusting production to keep the diameter constant.

The system works so well that in all the miles of fiber produced by Western Electric, the diameter varies by no more than 30-millionths of an inch.

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And Western Electric's Engineering Research Center is an essential link between the ideas of the laboratory and the realities of the factory.

So your Bell Telephone Company can make the best one-of-a-kind inventions a part of your phone service.

Keeping your communications system the best in the world.

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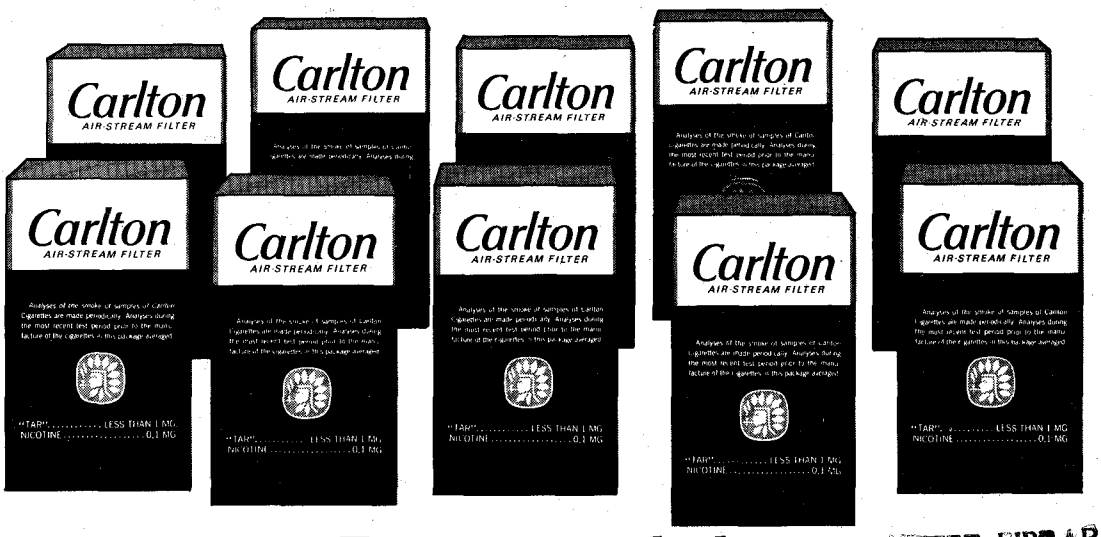

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Kool Milds	14	0.9
Marlboro Lights	12	0.8
Merit	8	0.6
Merit Menthol	8	0.6

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Salem Lights	10	0.8
Vantage	11	0.8
Vantage Menthol	11	0.8
Winston Lights	13	0.9

Carlton is lowest.

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